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Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Economic and Social Council the report of the Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), prepared pursuant to Council resolution 2007/32.

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Report of the Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)

Summary

The present report was prepared in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 2007/32, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to transmit to it at its substantive session of 2009 a report prepared by the Executive Director of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) in collaboration with other relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system.

During the reporting period, tangible results were achieved in the global response to AIDS, demonstrating that a collective and comprehensive commitment to addressing AIDS can produce positive outcomes. However, the magnitude and complexity of the epidemic require a continued and unwavering sense of urgency to meet existing and new challenges, as well as to address the long-term impact of AIDS.

Improved modelling methods and expanded surveillance programmes have led to adjusted and generally lower estimates for global HIV incidence, prevalence and mortality. Much expanded coverage of antiretroviral treatment for adults and children, as well as access to mother-to-child transmission prevention services in low and middle-income countries, illustrate that universal access to treatment may be ambitious but is ultimately achievable. Ensuring universal access to prevention will demand a concerted effort of combination prevention strategies, involving bio-medical, behavioural and structural approaches. Access to care and support for people living with or affected by HIV must also be a priority, particularly to ensure that children orphaned or made vulnerable by HIV are not overlooked.

At the country level, the Joint Programme has consolidated its support to the national response through working in joint United Nations teams on AIDS with a joint programme of support, and following the technical division of labour, giving credence to the concepts of harmonization and alignment, and helping to "make the money work".

All partners continue to support the "Three Ones" principles for coordination of national AIDS responses, including Governments, multilateral and bilateral donors and agencies, the United Nations system, civil society, and the private sector. This process has spearheaded and guided global efforts to increase aid effectiveness for HIV programmes by promoting one national strategic framework, one coordinating authority, and one monitoring and evaluation system.

Achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support remains the core priority for UNAIDS, and continued support is provided to countries to monitor and track progress, including through processes such as target setting, programme and indicator development and reporting requirements. As a result, a record 147 countries submitted their progress reports to UNAIDS. A consolidated report was presented at the 2008 high-level meeting of the General Assembly on AIDS.

Methods and systems to help countries to know their epidemic continue to improve, owing to the work of the Joint Programme and its reference groups. This applies to monitoring and evaluation, HIV surveillance and epidemiology, as well as resource tracking and financial needs analysis. As a result, more information is available about the diversity of national epidemics, which in turn can inform prevention strategies and thematic and geographic coverage of programming on HIV. Improved projections on resource needs, combined with improved epidemiological estimates, can bolster global advocacy and resource mobilization efforts for strategic action on AIDS, especially in the current climate of economic downturn. Nonetheless, planning for the long-term response to AIDS and securing predictable and reliable financing will be a major challenge in the next few years.

Many aspects of the epidemic evolve and change over time, yet certain key aspects appear resistant to change. Unless there are fundamental changes in attitudes, beliefs and laws, stigma, discrimination, gender inequities and the marginalized position of people living with HIV and populations most at risk will continue to negate the concerted and persistent efforts of all those contributing to the response to AIDS.

In conclusion, the Economic and Social Council is invited to review the report and the recommendations contained therein.

I. Update on the epidemic

1. Since the last report of the Executive Director of UNAIDS in 2007 (E/2007/56), improved modelling methods and expanded surveillance programmes have led to adjusted and generally lower estimates for global HIV incidence, prevalence and mortality. In 2007, it was estimated that 33 million people worldwide were living with HIV. An estimated 2.7 million new infections occurred during that year, 96 per cent of them in middle and low-income countries. Approximately 2 million people died of HIV-related causes.

2. By December 2007, 3 million people in low and middle-income countries had access to antiretroviral treatment, representing a noteworthy 47-per cent increase since December 2006. Between 2005 and 2007, the percentage of HIV-positive pregnant women receiving services to prevent mother-to-child transmission increased by 20 per cent, from 15 to 33 per cent. However, for every two people who started antiretroviral treatment in 2007, five new cases of HIV infection occurred, while 70 per cent of people who needed treatment did not have access to the required drugs. Overall, the response to AIDS remains a global effort marked by real gains and advances and equally sobering statistics and challenges.

A. Regional variations

3. Sub-Saharan Africa continues to bear the brunt of the disease burden, being home to 66 per cent of all adults living with HIV, and 90 per cent of all children with HIV worldwide. Three out of every four AIDS-related deaths occur in that region.

4. Asia has the most diverse epidemic in terms of modes of transmission, posing a wide range of challenges to this vast region. In Eastern Europe and Central Asia, epidemics are mostly concentrated in specific at-risk populations, such as injecting drug users, but overlap between vulnerable groups can fuel transmission. Epidemics in Latin America and the Caribbean are relatively stable. Yet in many countries where unprotected sex between men is the main mode of transmission, stigma and often institutionalized discrimination against same-sex relations — including through their criminalization — can drive epidemics underground and affect access to services.

B. HIV and women

5. One half of all persons living with HIV worldwide are women, and that proportion has remained stable over the past decade. However, women represent 60 per cent of adults infected with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa. Young women and girls are at especially high risk of HIV infection in that region; women in sub-Saharan Africa aged 15 to 24 years are, on average, three times more likely to be infected with HIV than young men of the same age. In terms of access to treatment, women in sub-Saharan Africa have equal or greater access to antiretroviral drugs than men. In other regions, the rates of infection among women are lower, but in many concentrated epidemics, women have less access to treatment than men. However, statistics alone do not fully reveal the complexity of women's vulnerability to infection, nor the full extent of the differential impact of the epidemic on women

and girls (including the impact of the burden of care, and the impact of limitations in sociocultural issues and legal protection, including those related to property and inheritance). Globally, gender inequalities and harmful gender norms and practices continue to negatively affect women's decision-making and are a violation of their human rights. Such inequalities in turn affect vulnerability to contracting HIV.

C. Children, young people and HIV

6. Children with HIV have historically received insufficient attention, as diagnosis of HIV in infants is difficult, and the use of standard adult treatment regimens is not appropriate. In sub-Saharan Africa, home to almost 90 per cent of children living with HIV, children are one third (33 per cent) less likely to receive treatment than adults. Without treatment, infants under the age of two have a 50 per cent chance of dying. As paediatric diagnostic tools and treatment regimens are developing, advances have been made in recent years. The generation of evidence in 2008 underscored that protection, care and support programmes should be AIDS-sensitive. This means that within geographical areas where HIV prevalence is higher (communities, districts, provinces and countries), broader targeting is appropriate to reach all vulnerable children. The 4th Global Partners Forum on children affected by AIDS (Dublin, October 2008) convened by Irish Aid and UNAIDS established global consensus around a firm evidence base for children affected by AIDS. Findings recommend that investments should be directed towards increasing access to basic services, ensuring appropriate alternative care and providing social support and protection from abuse and neglect. Social transfers were also shown to be effective, especially in the context of rising food prices. By the end of 2008, 50 countries developed AIDS-sensitive responses; 32 countries developed or finalized national plans of action benefiting children affected by AIDS.

D. Challenges and achievements

7. As large numbers of countries produce more and increasingly sophisticated data relating to their respective epidemics, "knowing your epidemic" is ever more possible. However, the challenge lies in translating advanced knowledge into targeted action plans and real implementation, reaching those audiences and populations most in need or at risk. Scale-up of treatment programmes is crucial and will save countless lives, yet prevention of HIV, as stated in the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS, will have to remain the cornerstone of the response.

II. Reporting on key results of the Joint Programme

8. Major benchmarks in the global response to AIDS remain the goals and targets set out in the 2001 Declaration of Commitment, the 2010 goal of achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support endorsed by the 2006 Political Declaration, and achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. Since the last report to the Economic and Social Council in 2007, the Joint Programme has continued and consolidated its work in support of the time-bound and concrete targets agreed on by Member States. At the high-level meeting of the

General Assembly on AIDS held in June 2008, representatives of Member States, the United Nations system and civil society gathered, as part of the annual reviews by the General Assembly, to undertake a comprehensive review of the progress achieved in the global response to AIDS.

9. Key areas of commitment include working with country partners on national target setting, implementation and reporting on universal access, strengthening United Nations system collaboration through the technical support division of labour and joint United Nations teams on AIDS at the country level, striving towards harmonization and alignment, and reinforcing the "Three Ones" concept. The Joint Programme is guided in this work by its five focus areas, namely:

- Leadership and advocacy;
- Strategic information and technical support;
- Monitoring and evaluation;
- Civil society engagement and partnerships;
- Mobilization of resources.

A. Leadership and advocacy

10. At its 21st meeting in December 2007, the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board approved the terms of reference for a second independent evaluation of UNAIDS, covering the period 2002-2008. The purpose of the evaluation is to reassess priorities, build on achievements, and determine how UNAIDS can play a more effective role in strengthening global coordination.

11. Under the guidance of an independent oversight committee, the evaluation process commenced in 2008, with the formal assessment period starting in September and continuing until April 2009. A first draft report will be presented to the oversight committee in May 2009, followed by stakeholder consultations. The final report is expected to be delivered to the Programme Coordinating Board in September to allow for follow-up discussions to be held at its 25th meeting in December 2009.

12. Peter Piot, who served as the Executive Director since the inception of the Joint Programme in 1996, ended his term in office in December 2008. He was succeeded in January 2009 by former UNAIDS Deputy Executive Director, Michel Sidibé, who has reiterated the UNAIDS commitment to universal access as a key corporate priority and is working closely with countries towards the achievement of the Programme's targets.

1. 2008 high-level meeting of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS

13. The high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS of June 2008 brought together representatives from Member States, the United Nations family and civil society to undertake a comprehensive review of the progress made in implementing the 2001 Declaration of Commitment and the 2006 Political Declaration.

14. The Meeting appreciated that tangible progress had been made since the high-level meeting of 2006. An unprecedented 147 country reports, containing information on 25 core indicators, provided the most comprehensive overview to

date of the response at the country level. The results had been consolidated in the report of the Secretary-General on the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS: midway to the Millennium Development Goals (A/62/780), prepared by the UNAIDS secretariat.

15. Despite remarkable progress in terms of antiretroviral coverage in low and middle- income countries, and in prevention of mother-to-child transmission services to HIV-infected pregnant women, the report highlighted many unmet needs and targets. These included the findings that 85 per cent of children orphaned or made vulnerable by HIV did not receive any form of assistance between 2005 and 2007, and that in many countries only 20 to 30 per cent of the persons interviewed had basic HIV-related knowledge. One third of countries still lack legal protection from HIV-related discrimination, and even where laws exist, the degree to which protective legislation is enforced is unclear. These significant shortcomings underscore the need for universal access, not only to treatment, but also to HIV prevention, care, and support, including programming for non-discrimination and access to justice.

16. The role of the Joint Programme in the response was recognized by countries as critical. The United Nations system was called upon to assist national efforts in moving towards achieving the universal access goals, and to strengthening HIV prevention programmes to better reflect local realities. Countries further recognized AIDS as a public health as well as a development issue, requiring a multisectoral response. Human rights and gender issues were singled out as being imperative to an effective response, while leadership and political accountability were underlined as the most important part of the solution.

2. Women and girls: accelerating gender action

17. UNAIDS has enhanced its efforts to better address the HIV-related needs and concerns of women and girls through the establishment of an inter-agency task team on women, girls and gender equality. The team (convened by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its lead role on gender within the UNAIDS division of labour and with the participation of all UNAIDS co-sponsors, the Secretariat and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)), is finalizing an inter-agency framework for action, which is focused on accelerating strategic action at the country level. Catalytic resources are newly available to joint United Nations teams on AIDS to specifically address issues related to women and girls, and to facilitate enhanced action in partnership with Governments and other stakeholders. Two global inter-agency initiatives are under way to: (a) enhance the capacity of regional technical support bodies to provide support to national stakeholders on gender and HIV (led by UNDP); and (b) understand and respond to the linkages between violence against women and HIV (led by the World Health Organization (WHO).

3. Strengthening the United Nations response to AIDS

(a) Division of labour, joint United Nations teams and programmes of support

18. The technical division of labour agreed on in 2005 has helped to further streamline United Nations support to countries in line with each co-sponsor's comparative advantage, while coherence within the United Nations system has been

strengthened by the creation of joint United Nations teams on AIDS and joint United Nations programmes of support at the country level.

19. Striving towards more effective and coordinated functioning of the United Nations system in response to AIDS remains an ongoing process. Practical support is provided through instruments such as the *Toolkit for joint United Nations teams and joint United Nations programmes of support on AIDS*, while the process continues to be guided by the 2005 recommendations of the Global Task Team on Improving AIDS Coordination among Multilateral Institutions and International Donors, as well as instructions issued by the Secretary-General and the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board.

(b) Programme acceleration funds

20. The programme acceleration funds mechanism was established as a key tool for United Nations country teams to support the national response with strategic and catalytic resources and to strengthen the coordination and effectiveness of the United Nations system at the country level. The total programme acceleration funds allocation for the biennium 2008-2009 is US$ 28 million.

21. In line with the 2008-2009 Unified Budget and Workplan, the programme acceleration funds mechanism is helping to intensify technical support for scale-up in specific areas. In particular, efforts for enhanced coordination will be targeted towards stakeholders as well as entities and organizations working to address HIV among populations of humanitarian concern. Close inter-agency collaboration in these areas, through the United Nations theme group on AIDS, the joint United Nations team on AIDS and the UNAIDS country coordinator, will strengthen the United Nations response at the country level.

4. AIDS, security and the humanitarian response

22. UNAIDS co-sponsors have made progress in aligning national AIDS responses with humanitarian coordination in countries affected by emergencies and humanitarian and security crises. Inter-Agency Standing Committee guidance has been revised. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has made progress in ensuring access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support for refugees and internally displaced persons. For refugees, there is now 100 per cent coverage in essential HIV prevention services; coverage of voluntary counselling and testing improved from 60 to 70 per cent, while access to antiretroviral treatment increased from 44 to 75 per cent. In 2008, the agency launched the five-year HIV/AIDS strategic plan (2008-2012) to support, promote and implement HIV/AIDS policies and programmes for refugees, internally displaced persons and other persons of concern. UNHCR and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) initiated research and guidance development on HIV-sex work in emergencies. the World Food Programme (WFP) continued to address the food and nutritional needs of people living with HIV affected by conflict or natural disaster, including non-displaced populations. WHO facilitated further expansion of HIV counselling and testing and antiretroviral therapy services and training for health-care workers. UNDP, UNFPA, the UNAIDS secretariat and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations integrated important HIV and gender elements into disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes and important prevention, treatment care and support work with military and other uniformed services has

ensued. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) supported implementation and scaling-up of preventing mother-to-child transmission and programmes for HIV prevention among adolescents in complex emergencies. Co-sponsors provided capacity-building on HIV prevention, care and treatment in emergencies and carried out research to ensure that activities are evidence based.

B. Strategic information and technical support

23. UNAIDS works to provide reliable and updated information based on evidence, best-practice and human rights standards, in order to provide optimal support to country responses, while making available appropriate technical support in line with a country's needs and demands.

1. Country-focused approach: national and global targets

24. A total of 111 countries has established national targets for universal access. As a country-led and country-owned process, coverage and intended outcome targets are country-specific, although the underlying and unifying principles are that services should be equitable, accessible, affordable, comprehensive and sustainable over the long term. Equity is particularly important in this regard. Neither risk of HIV infection nor the impact of the disease is equally distributed across national populations. National efforts to expand service access must take into account the special vulnerabilities and access barriers experienced by particular populations. For example, a country with a concentrated epidemic may focus its efforts on tailored prevention and treatment programmes among populations most at risk; a high-prevalence country may develop population-level prevention programming and wide-scale treatment and care, while countries hosting displaced populations need to sufficiently and meaningfully include them in their AIDS policies and programmes.

25. Although targets are often ambitious, there is sufficient evidence worldwide to demonstrate its feasibility, including in emergency settings. Antiretroviral treatment utilization rose more than five-fold in Cambodia between 2004 and 2007, and by December 2007, the country was on track to achieving universal access to HIV treatment. In South Africa and Thailand, the number of people receiving antiretroviral treatment roughly doubled between 2005 and 2007. In Barbados, nearly three out of four persons with advanced HIV infection were receiving treatment as of December 2007, while the Bahamas and Botswana had by that time already achieved universal access to HIV prevention services in antenatal settings.

2. Support for country-level harmonization and alignment ("Three Ones")

26. At the country level, the concept of the "Three Ones" — one national strategic framework, one coordinating authority and one monitoring and evaluation system — remains the cornerstone of strengthened national ownership and of improved harmonization and alignment of support to the national response. This has become even more imperative in the current climate of global economic downturn, necessitating optimal and effective use of resources, strong national leadership, greater strategic impact and reduction of duplication.

27. Frameworks for effective national responses are in place in most countries: 97 per cent of countries have a multisectoral HIV strategy, 92 per cent have a national HIV coordinating body, 92 per cent have a national monitoring and

evaluation plan in place or in development, and all low and middle-income countries have integrated HIV into national development plans. In 69 per cent of countries, national HIV frameworks have been translated into costed operational plans with identified funding sources.

28. The AIDS Strategy and Action Plan service, hosted by the World Bank in collaboration with UNDP, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNICEF, the International Labour Organization (ILO), WHO and the UNAIDS secretariat, has supported over 50 countries in developing, assessing or revising national strategic frameworks and building capacity in strategic and operational planning, costing and monitoring and evaluation.

29. By strategically using the joint annual programme reviews of a country's national strategic framework, and by applying the country harmonization and alignment tool in this process, countries can further assess and enhance the levels of coordination and effectiveness of support to their national response.

30. Global improvements in the delivery and use of international development assistance as agreed on in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in 2005 were assessed at the High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness, held in Ghana in September 2008. Three main challenges as identified by the Accra Agenda for Action related to country ownership, building more effective and inclusive partnerships, and achieving concrete results and being accountable for them.

31. The AIDS response can be seen as a champion of advocacy for more inclusive partnerships; it has pioneered the principle of ownership through the "Three Ones", and has achieved concrete progress in terms of results and accountability through collective focus.

3. Technical support facilities

32. In order to increase access to quality and timely technical support and promoting south to south technical cooperation, UNAIDS established six regional technical support facilities covering southern Africa, East Africa, West and Central Africa, South Asia, South-East Asia and the Pacific and the International Centre for Technical Cooperation in Brazil.

33. The technical support facilities have a dual role, in that they aim to build capacity among regional and national consultants to deliver technical support services, thereby improving access to timely and quality local technical assistance, while at the same time building the capacity of country partner staff to more effectively manage technical support projects and missions, in order to enhance the impact of technical assistance. UNAIDS is also working with national AIDS authorities and international partners in improved harmonization of technical assistance and in strengthening accountability of providers of technical assistance.

34. Focusing on target areas such as strategic and operational planning, costing, budgeting and monitoring and evaluation, technical support facilities have worked with many national AIDS authorities, ministries and civil society partners in over 90 countries. They have also worked closely with the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund) both to improve the quality of country proposals (i.e., countries supported through the technical support facility for Round 8 of Global Fund proposals in 2008 had a success rate of 70 per cent compared to the overall success rate of 49 per cent) and implementation of approved

grants. Over 20,000 days of technical assistance have been provided by the technical support facility in 2007-2008 in critical areas, which has resulted in stronger proposals and several examples of unblocking of grant flows. For instance, when a Global Fund grant to Chad was suspended in 2006, the technical support facility for West and Central Africa supported a major revision of the workplan and budget and provided technical assistance to the country coordinating mechanism to clarify roles and responsibilities and initiate reforms that improved the functioning of the mechanisms. As a result, the suspension was lifted within a year.

4. Support to mainstreaming AIDS in development

35. In line with the technical division of labour, UNDP is the lead agency on mainstreaming HIV in national development plans and instruments such as poverty reduction strategy papers. Through a joint programme with the World Bank and the UNAIDS secretariat, UNDP lent support to 23 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean and Eastern Europe to integrate HIV responses into poverty reduction strategy papers and national development planning and implementation processes. The programme resulted in strengthened integration of HIV responses in sector and district plans, and in national planning and budgeting processes.

36. To support countries in mitigating the impacts of AIDS, socio-economic impact assessments were undertaken in sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and methodologies to analyse household-level impacts were developed and implemented in Asia. In addition, UNDP led the development of a conceptual framework to identify strategic approaches for more effective HIV mainstreaming in low-prevalence settings.

37. The UNAIDS Inter-agency Task Team on Education, convened by UNESCO, developed a toolkit to help education staff from development cooperation agencies to support the process of mainstreaming HIV into education sector planning and implementation. The toolkit has been used at the country level to assess the progress countries have made with respect to HIV mainstreaming; to identify entry points and opportunities; and to establish priorities for advocacy and action.

5. Resources tracking

38. With global and domestic resources available for AIDS in low and middle-income countries having reached US$ 13.8 billion in 2008, up from US$ 11.3 billion in 2007, tracking of these resources is of key importance. Considering that almost 53 per cent of funds available in 2008 came from domestic sources and 31 per cent from bilateral donors, the effects of the global economic crisis on spending priorities of national Governments and donors can be seriously detrimental to the AIDS response. Accurate assessment of available and needed resource flows, and of the gap between the two, is crucial to maintaining adequate levels of funding, especially in the light of the 2010 target of achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support.

39. UNAIDS-led teams of health economists and epidemiologists have improved and refined the substantive basis for estimates of financial need, while also working closely with countries to generate reliable data through the National AIDS Spending Assessment resource tracking methodology.

6. Intensifying HIV prevention

40. HIV prevention is the single most effective way of halting the spread of the epidemic, and both the 2001 Declaration of Commitment and the 2006 Political Declaration reinforced this by stating that prevention must be the mainstay of the response. Studies have indicated that accelerating universal access to HIV prevention would prevent more than half of all new infections that would otherwise occur in the years leading up to 2015, illustrating how crucial meeting the universal access target on prevention is to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Yet prevention has proven to be the most elusive element of a comprehensive response, underscored by the fact that only about half of all countries that have set targets for universal access have included targets for prevention. Although there is no "magic bullet" or quick-fix approach, this does not mean prevention does not or cannot work.

41. UNAIDS contributed to the organization of the first meeting of Ministers of Education and Health from Latin America and the Caribbean to identify strategies for strengthening HIV prevention. The meeting concluded with the ministers signing a historic declaration affirming a mandate for national school-based sex and HIV education throughout the region. The Declaration calls for comprehensive "sexuality education" as a core area of instruction at both primary and secondary schools in the region.

42. Assessing experiences of different countries in various regions and a broad-based body of scientific evidence, it is clear that prevention strategies work best when different approaches are combined. This is referred to as "combination prevention". It involves choosing an appropriate mix of behavioural, biomedical and structural HIV prevention tactics and activities that are both short and long-term in nature, that is, in combination, they address immediate risk as well as underlying social dynamics that increase vulnerability. Such an approach requires strategic information ("know your epidemic"), resources and a long-term sustained effort, and not many countries have as yet embarked on a combination approach. Yet evidence from Namibia shows that, following a combination of HIV prevention approaches, levels of knowledge about HIV and condom use rose and declines were documented in the proportion of people reporting sex before the age of 15, as well as the percentage of people having more than one sex partner.

43. Prevention programmes need to be based on local, rather than just national realities. As surveillance methods have improved and expanded, more detailed information highlights the diversity between and within epidemics. Modes of transmission analyses have helped to demonstrate that in some predominantly heterosexual epidemics, a considerable amount of new infections occur among men having sex with men and among injecting drug users. Prevention strategies should therefore be evidence-informed, appropriate and specific, and relevant to the target audience.

44. WHO supports countries with technical advice on male circumcision where this would be an appropriate biomedical prevention strategy. Prevention of mother-to-child transmission, supported strongly by WHO, UNFPA and UNICEF, is a relatively cheap but highly effective prevention method that is essential to any prevention strategy. To address structural drivers of the epidemic, UNDP engages country partners on stigma and discrimination and supports integration and programming of gender in national HIV strategies. UNESCO works with countries

to ensure appropriate and quality education on HIV in schools and in teacher training programmes, most notably through the Global Initiative on Education and HIV/AIDS. Comprehensive male and female condom programming and linking HIV with sexual and reproductive health as entry points for prevention and care for women fall within the mandate of UNFPA. UNFPA works with Governments and other stakeholders to develop programmes and strategies to scale up male and female condoms for prevention of HIV and unintended pregnancies. The expertise of UNFPA, UNDP, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and UNHCR ensures that inclusive prevention strategies are relevant to specific vulnerable or at risk populations, such as out-of-school young people, sex workers, men who have sex with men, transgender people, prisoners, injecting drug users, refugees and displaced persons.

45. In 2008, high food prices compromised the food security and nutritional status of many of the world's most vulnerable people, while at the same time treatment roll-out in countries with high rates of food insecurity led to greater demands for food support. In 2008, WFP assisted over 2.4 million beneficiaries with food and nutrition support through HIV interventions, and beneficiaries on antiretroviral treatment increased by 87 per cent. This is a result of efforts on the part of national Governments and the international community to make this treatment accessible to all and also because of increasing awareness of the role of nutrition and food support in treatment, to a large degree through the work of WFP.

7. Increasing access to HIV treatment

46. At the end of 2007, an estimated 3 million people in low and middle-income countries were receiving antiretroviral treatment. This represented a 42 per cent increase since December 2006, and a tenfold increase over the last five years. Although a truly impressive gain, it was at the same time estimated that 70 per cent of people worldwide who needed treatment still did not have access to it. Individual country stories can serve to inspire and show that success is achievable: Namibia had negligible treatment coverage in 2003 but had 88 per cent of people who needed it on treatment in 2007. In Rwanda, treatment coverage increased from 1 per cent in 2003 to almost 60 per cent in 2007.

47. Since the last report to the Economic and Social Council in 2007, significant progress in paediatric care and treatment has been making an impact, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. From an estimated 75,000 children on treatment in 2005 to 115,000 by December 2006, it is estimated that by December 2007 almost 200,000 children under the age of 15 had received antiretroviral treatment. In addition, the number of children receiving treatment through the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) doubled in 2008.

48. UNICEF is playing a key part in supporting children's access to care and treatment. For example, UNICEF and partners joined efforts to build national capacity for early infant diagnosis of HIV and scale up use of cotrimoxazole. This low-cost, effective, and critical intervention can delay or prevent serious illness in infants with HIV.

49. Cost reductions in antiretroviral drugs remain vital to scaling up treatment coverage and long-term sustainability. Continued advocacy by activists, the Joint Programme and other key partners, such as International Drug Purchase Facility (UNITAID) and the Clinton Foundation, have led to significant price reductions in

first and second-line treatment regimens, including drugs appropriate for children. Competition from generic drug manufacturers is putting further pressure on pharmaceutical companies to reduce prices.

50. International intellectual property agreements also aid improved accessibility to treatment. In that regard, UNDP has helped to build country capacity for adoption of enabling trade and health policies and legislation, including support to patent examiners in Africa and Latin America to promote examination of pharmaceutical patents from a public health perspective.

8. Human rights, gender and greater involvement of people living with HIV: cross-cutting priorities

51. Universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support cannot be achieved without adequately understanding and addressing the social, cultural and structural determinants of the epidemic. Stigma, discrimination, gender inequality and social marginalization of groups most at risk and of people living with HIV are all factors that impede progress in the global response.

52. Information presented at the 2008 high-level meeting showed that more countries had adopted anti-discrimination laws protecting people living with HIV. Although a positive development, anti-discrimination laws need enforcement in order to be effective. At the same time, increasing numbers of countries are putting in place laws that impose criminal penalties on people who transmit HIV or expose another person to the virus. While such laws are most likely motivated by a desire to prevent HIV transmission by deterring risky behaviour, there is great concern that, in fact, they will deter people from testing for HIV, or dilute the public health message of shared responsibility for sexual health between sexual partners. These laws can also result in the miscarriage of justice when applied disproportionately to members of marginalized groups, such as sex workers, men who have sex with men, transgender people and people who use drugs. Poorly drafted laws or inappropriate enforcement may result in the prosecution of individuals who are unaware of their infection, did not understand how HIV is transmitted, or failed to disclose their HIV infection to the person at risk. Even when the intention of legislators is to protect women, who are frequently placed at risk due to the sexual behaviour of their husbands or male partners, the effect can be the opposite: because women often use health services more frequently than men, they are often the first to be diagnosed with HIV infection and may be blamed for "bringing HIV into the relationship".

53. To aid informed decision-making in August 2008, the UNAIDS secretariat and UNDP issued a policy brief providing guidance and clarification on criminalization of HIV transmission. The UNAIDS secretariat continued to promote key publications, including the *International Guidelines on HIV/AIDS and Human Rights* (published with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights); *Courting Rights: Case Studies in Litigating the Human Rights of People Living with HIV*; *Handbook on HIV and Human Rights for National Human Rights Institutions*; and *Reducing HIV Stigma and Discrimination: a critical part of national AIDS programmes. A resource for national stakeholders in the HIV response*.

54. The UNAIDS secretariat convened the International Task Team on HIV-related Travel Restrictions in January 2008, comprising over 40 members from Governments, civil society and international organizations, including co-sponsors.

The Task Team worked to galvanize commitment and action towards the elimination of HIV-related restrictions on entry, stay and residence. The report of its findings and recommendations was presented to the Board of the Global Fund in November 2008, and the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board in December 2008.

55. Among the co-sponsors, UNDP and UNODC have supported reviews of laws to promote and protect HIV-related human rights, and provided support to national partners to address inappropriate criminalization of HIV transmission in sub-Saharan Africa, South and South-East Asia and Central Asia. Technical support was provided to parliamentarians representing all Arab countries for the development of a draft Arab convention to protect rights of people living with HIV, while assessments of laws relating to women's property and inheritance rights, sex work, and trafficking were undertaken in Asia.

56. ILO has engaged in training over 140 labour judges and magistrates on HIV discrimination and related issues, at the request of Governments and authorities responsible for labour courts and industrial tribunals. The ILO further assisted ministries, employers' and workers' organizations and individual enterprises in 70 countries develop and implement HIV policies at the workplace, sector and national levels, involving over 660 enterprises. Some 256 enterprises agreed on new HIV workplace policies, including the integration of HIV into occupational safety and health and general wellness worker programmes.

57. The work of ILO throughout 2008 was guided by the process of developing a new international labour standard on HIV in the world of work. Two reports have been prepared to support this process. The first represents the most comprehensive compilation to date of national laws and policies on HIV/AIDS. The second report is an analysis of replies to a questionnaire from over 250 respondents: 136 Member States in consultation with networks of people living with HIV, 64 employers' organizations and 69 workers' organizations. The new instrument is intended to strengthen the development of national workplace policies on HIV as part of national AIDS strategies and programmes.

C. Monitoring and evaluation

58. Coordinated monitoring and evaluation approaches are crucial for generating reliable and timely information on the AIDS epidemic and the response across countries and regions. The use of standardized definitions and indicators supports countries in measuring their way towards universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support, as well as in taking evidence-informed action and ensuring accountability.

59. The UNAIDS secretariat continues to play a leading role in coordinating and supporting monitoring and evaluation efforts by developing tools and systems for the collection and analysis of country data and reporting mechanisms. In this work, UNAIDS is guided by the multi-agency Monitoring and Evaluation Reference Group that sets standards for indicators and their use.

1. New developments

60. In March 2009, UNAIDS launched a central repository of information on indicators used to track the response to the epidemic. Through the Indicator

Registry, professionals in monitoring and evaluation have access to the complete definitions of all key indicators in one central database. The registry allows its users to select appropriate indicators to monitor a country's epidemic and response and specifically highlights the harmonized indicators that have been endorsed by a wide range of multilateral agencies and international organizations. Key target audiences of the Indicator Registry are national AIDS authorities in the process of defining or reviewing the monitoring and evaluation plan for their national response to HIV, as well as implementers monitoring their HIV programmes.

61. The development of the Indicator Registry was a multi-agency effort with support from WHO, UNICEF, the Global Fund, PEPFAR and the UNAIDS secretariat, and guided by the Monitoring and Evaluation Reference Group.

2. Monitoring and evaluating country responses

62. To aid countries in their monitoring and evaluation efforts, the country response information system was developed. It facilitates the collection, reporting and analysis of project, financial and indicator data. It also allows for the adding of new indicators, unlimited disaggregation of data and supports changing analytical needs. The advanced system further allows the inclusion of a variety of plans for national monitoring other than the United Nations General Assembly special session and universal access indicators, such as PEPFAR and the Global Fund, with their own indicators, targets and reports.

63. Leading up to the 2008 high-level meeting, 147 countries submitted progress reports to UNAIDS, the most comprehensive overview to date of advances in achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. This wealth of data on country progress and challenges is used in publications — the *Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic 2008*, to inform policy and strategy development, for resource mobilization, and is direct evidence of the accountability of countries towards the Declaration of Commitment.

3. Building national monitoring and evaluation capacity

64. A national monitoring and evaluation plan is in place or in development in 92 per cent of countries. The process of capacity-building is ongoing, as systems, tools and indicators keep evolving. In October 2008, a global training workshop was held for monitoring and evaluation advisers and national monitoring and evaluation counterparts from more than 60 countries. The training was based on a recently developed knowledge, skills and competencies framework, ensuring the use of unified standards on key monitoring and evaluation technical and managerial skills and competencies in support of the "Three Ones" principle and universal access.

65. Another key actor in the area of country capacity-building on monitoring and evaluation is the Global HIV/AIDS Monitoring and Evaluation Support Team. Established by UNAIDS and located at the World Bank, the Team helps to strengthen national monitoring and evaluation capacity through an international team of monitoring and evaluation specialists, based primarily in developing countries. They provide rapid, intensive, flexible, practical and expert hands-on monitoring and evaluation support to more than 35 countries. The central mission of the Team is to improve the quality of monitoring and evaluation on HIV and build national capacity to support the achievement of the third "One".

4. Epidemiology

66. Reliable epidemiological data is the foundation of the global AIDS response.

67. Improved modelling methods and expanded surveillance programmes are accompanied by new tools to help countries know their epidemics even better. One example is the mode of transmission analysis. Among other things, it studies the rate at which new HIV infections are occurring and the groups that are most likely to become infected. Supported by the UNAIDS Regional Support Team for Eastern and Southern Africa, 11 countries in sub-Saharan Africa conducted modes of transmission analyses in 2008, leading to adjustments of their AIDS strategies, in particular on prevention. In Uganda, for example, the analysis revealed that an estimated 43 per cent of new infections were estimated to be occurring among seemingly "low-risk" couples involving individuals with different HIV status. In Kenya, modes of transmission analyses showed that more than 1 in 10 new infections stemmed from either sex among men or injecting drug use. In addition, analyses suggest that a high prevalence of concurrent sexual partnerships accelerates the diffusion of HIV infection throughout sexual networks when the virus is introduced.

D. Civil society engagement and partnerships

68. In many countries, actions and activism by civil society groups have spearheaded local and national responses to AIDS in the early years of the epidemic. Today, in many countries, civil society is the main provider of prevention, treatment, care and support services. As such, civil society is well placed to be a driving force for universal access and ensuring the feasibility, relevance and cost effectiveness of proposed targets and scale-up activities.

69. One example of a partnership that is of key importance to UNAIDS is that with people living with HIV. People living with HIV are involved in a wide variety of activities at all levels of the response to AIDS. To ensure the greater and meaningful involvement of people living with HIV in the response to AIDS, UNAIDS works closely with key networks of people living with HIV, including the Global Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (GNP+) and the International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (ICW). At the country level, several UNAIDS offices host organizations of people living with HIV. UNAIDS also hosts UN+, the HIV-positive staff group in the United Nations system, with a membership that spans all United Nations agencies.

1. 2008 high-level meeting

70. Similar to the preparations for the 2006 high-level meeting, UNAIDS facilitated the participation of civil society at the high-level meeting of 2008 by convening the Civil Society Task Force. Almost 700 civil society groups were invited to attend.

71. At the interactive civil society hearing, representatives of civil society organizations addressed Member States and observers on a range of issues relating to achieving universal access, and from an array of different perspectives, such as HIV and human rights, sex workers, sexual minorities, people who use drugs, women and girls, children, access to treatment, HIV-related travel restrictions,

mobility and migration, workplace responses and civil society involvement and AIDS accountability.

72. In addition, civil society groups in nearly all countries had been actively involved in the monitoring and reporting of progress on the core indicators for the Declaration of Commitment. They provided data to supplement national reports, engaged in national reporting workshops and produced shadow reports. In 75 per cent of countries, civil society groups reported that their involvement in the national response to HIV improved between 2005-2006 and 2007-2008, although they indicated that such engagement remains inadequate in nearly one quarter of countries.

2. Other civil society initiatives

73. According to Government reports, 83 per cent of national HIV coordinating bodies include civil society representatives. Reports of civil society groups indicate that they have been involved in the review of national HIV strategies in 84 per cent of countries and in national planning and budgeting in 59 per cent of countries. However, civil society groups have access to adequate financial support in only 19 per cent of countries.

E. Resource mobilization

74. The increase in funds available for the response in low and middle-income countries has been significant since the 2001 Declaration of Commitment, reaching US$ 11.3 billion in 2007, and 13.6 billion in 2008. This represents a tenfold increase in less than a decade. The main contributors to this achievement have been the Global Fund, created in direct response to the 2001 Declaration of Commitment, and PEPFAR. The Global Fund has committed US$ 15.6 billion for health programmes in 140 countries, while through PEPFAR, US$ 18.8 billion has been made available since 2003.

75. Low and middle-income countries themselves have doubled their spending on HIV between 2005 and 2007, and together they now contribute 53 per cent of all expenditure on HIV in low and middle-income countries. In addition, the World Bank Multi-country AIDS Programme has committed 1.6 billion globally, while support through the philanthropic sector has reached approximately US$ 1 billion.

76. The role of the Joint Programme in the process of resource mobilization is diverse. As the driving force behind "making the money work", UNAIDS supports the utilization of available funds in the most efficient and effective way possible at the country level. In addition, by tracking the flow of global resources, UNAIDS helps to ensure accountability of expenditure. By assessing global needs and availability of resources, UNAIDS remains the main source for identifying resource gaps, thematically and geographically. This directly links in with achieving universal access: the nature of the epidemic, in combination with particular access gaps that are prevalent in a certain setting, should determine where resources should flow to achieve universal access. As such, UNAIDS estimates that sub-Saharan Africa would require roughly half of all resources for HIV, followed by South-East Asia and the Pacific (30 per cent), Latin America and the Caribbean (12 per cent), Eastern Europe and Central Asia (6 per cent), and the Middle East and North Africa (3 per cent).

77. As a global advocate, UNAIDS will continue to make projections and publicize the gap between resource availability and resource needs. As it stands, to reach universal access by 2010, an estimated US$ 25 billion needs to be made available in 2009 and 2010. This would require that a gap of US$ 11.3 billion be filled, predominantly by international donors. Considering the current global economic downturn, this may appear particularly challenging, but, the cost of not achieving this particular target would be immense and ultimately unforgivable, as this would translate directly into an estimated 2.9 million new infections, and 1.3 million deaths due to AIDS.

Long-term and sustainable financing for HIV

78. A major challenge facing the global response in terms of resources is to prepare for the long term and plan beyond the 2010 targets of universal access and the 2015 Millennium Development Goals. HIV has firmly entrenched itself in communities, societies, workplaces and health systems worldwide, and financing therefore needs to be predictable.

79. As treatment becomes increasingly available to larger numbers of people, resources need to be equally available to carry them through an entire lifetime. Prevention will have to remain high on the agenda, as complacency and loss of commitment will lead to higher incidence. Care and support need to reach far more people than currently the case, as for instance only an estimated 15 per cent of orphans receive any form of assistance.

80. With instruments and mechanisms such as the Global Fund, UNITAID and Project RED, creative initiatives have been proven to exist and work. Other options are increased use of basket funding, whereby multiple donors pool their resources to support national strategies and priorities, and the conversion of grant programmes into standing lines of credit on which countries can draw.

81. What will be key to any of these processes and initiatives is improved and increased harmonization and alignment: reducing duplication and administrative and reporting requirements while enhancing strategic and interdisciplinary coordination. UNAIDS has a key role here, building on its experience with the "Three Ones" to guide global commitments on aid effectiveness and optimal use of resources to a more sustainable response to AIDS.

III. Recommendations and proposed actions for the Economic and Social Council

The Council may wish to consider the following actions:

1. **Commend the support provided by the Joint Programme to the process of achieving universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support, in particular the assistance to countries in reporting on their progress to the General Assembly, resulting in 147 country reports in 2008, providing the most comprehensive overview to date of the response at the country level.**

2. **Acknowledge the insidious and persistent drivers of the epidemic, in particular stigma, discrimination, gender inequality and lack of respect for human rights, and encourage intensified advocacy by the Joint Programme to**

ensure that these underlying obstacles to universal access, including services to other underserved and vulnerable populations, are addressed at all levels.

3. **Acknowledge the importance of prevention in the response to AIDS and encourage the Joint Programme to support countries in embracing a "combination prevention" approach to prevention by channelling its assistance through the joint United Nations team on AIDS, based on the technical division of labour.**

4. **Acknowledge the gains made in terms of access to treatment and encourage the Joint Programme to promote in particular access to treatment for children and infants.**

5. **Acknowledge the critical importance of people living with HIV to all aspects of national AIDS responses, global advocacy efforts, and the work of the United Nations system on AIDS and encourage increased support to civil society's capacity for programme implementation and advocacy, towards the goal of universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support.**

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Coordination, programme and other questions

Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 2008/34, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its substantive session of 2009 a detailed report on progress made in the implementation of this resolution and updated information on the implementation of paragraph 4 of Council resolution 2006/36. The report also provides, further to resolution 2006/9, an assessment of the impact of inputs of the Commission on the Status of Women on discussions within the United Nations system.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted in response to resolution 2008/34 of the Economic and Social Council. It provides details on progress made in implementing resolution 2008/34 and an update on the implementation of paragraph 4 of Council resolution 2006/36. In response to paragraph 19 of Council resolution 2006/9, the present report also includes an assessment of the impact of the inputs of the Commission on the Status of Women on discussions within the United Nations system.

2. The report draws on the responses of 38 United Nations entities[1] to a questionnaire approved by the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality at its eighth session, held from 24 to 26 February 2009.

3. The present report is divided into five sections as follows: section I, introduction; section II, progress in the implementation of Economic and Social Council resolution 2008/34; section III, update of implementation of Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/36; section IV, impact of inputs of the Commission on the Status of Women on the work of the United Nations system; and section V, conclusions and recommendations.

II. Progress in the implementation of Economic and Social Council resolution 2008/34

4. The Council, through its resolution 2008/34, reaffirmed the globally recognized role of gender mainstreaming as a strategy for achieving gender equality and in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. The Council noted, inter alia, that a wide gap remained between policy and practice with respect to gender mainstreaming and, in paragraph 4 of resolution 2008/34, called upon the United

[1] Department of Political Affairs, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, including the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Division for Advancement of Women, Department of Public Information, Office of Internal Oversight Services, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Department of Management, the United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Department of Safety and Security, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Economic Commission for Europe, Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Population Fund, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, United Nations Children's Fund, World Food Programme, United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, International Labour Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, International Fund for Agricultural Development, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, International Civil Aviation Organization, International Telecommunication Union, World Intellectual Property Organization, United Nations Fund for International Partnerships, United Nations Volunteers, United Nations Forum on Forests, World Trade Organization, United Nations Development Fund for Women, International Atomic Energy Agency, International Maritime Organization, Office of Legal Affairs and World Health Organization.

Nations system to take action in various areas. Those areas are discussed in the present section.

A. Strengthening accountability systems and mechanisms

5. In subparagraphs (a) and (b) of paragraph 4 of resolution 2008/34, the Council called for strengthened institutional accountability mechanisms, including through a more effective monitoring and evaluation framework for gender mainstreaming, based on common United Nations evaluation standards. It requested that accountability systems be strengthened for both management and staff through, inter alia, the inclusion of objectives and results related to gender mainstreaming in personnel workplans and appraisals.

6. In order to strengthen accountability systems, a number of entities have incorporated gender perspectives into the workplans of both management and staff, which are subject to evaluation through the appraisal system. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) reported on their involvement in an ongoing overview of institutional practices regarding management response to evaluation, with a view to identifying lessons learned and good practices.

7. The International Labour Organization (ILO), for example, reported that staff workplans were linked to its Action Plan on Gender Equality and Gender Mainstreaming, and were produced in a participatory manner in capacity-building workshops organized for gender focal points and programming staff. The World Health Organization (WHO) has integrated a gender classification into its enterprise resource planning system whereby staff are asked to indicate whether specific activities in the workplan are gender responsive. Some WHO clusters, such as Family and Community Health, have asked all senior managers to include gender in their performance appraisals.

8. At the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), a new staff performance appraisal system includes indicators to promote gender equality within staff members' areas of responsibility and actions to promote understanding and address individuals' commitment to gender equality. In the Department of Safety and Security, managers are required to include gender-related objectives in their workplans to allow monitoring and recognition of achievements. The revision of the results and competency assessment system of UNDP introduced some major changes to performance management which aim to reinforce the results-based, strategic direction of UNDP. The 2009 results and competency assessment includes gender equality as one of the five mandatory key results for managers.

9. At the regional and country levels, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is using gender reviews to provide a basis for accountability. Some regions are developing innovative governance and accountability approaches which draw on a combined system of focal points, monitoring by regional and country-level management teams and an annual performance evaluation review. All regional directors report their progress in this area to the Executive Director through a global task force. The regional bureaux of UNDP have established gender steering committees at the regional level as an oversight mechanism to advance gender equality and the advancement of women. Furthermore, the UNDP Regional Bureau

for Asia and Pacific has established a Regional Gender Advisory Panel comprising gender experts from the region, representatives of Governments and civil society to inform its Gender Steering Committee and the regional programme.

10. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations reports that a gender checklist was developed in 2008 for senior managers in peacekeeping missions as a first step to the development of an accountability framework. The checklist has been disseminated to all senior managers in peacekeeping missions with the request that they provide biannual progress reports. Both the Department of Peacekeeping Operations action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and the gender checklist have specific benchmarks and indicators of achievement against which progress is being measured. The action plan also includes clear gender equality results. For example, in the section of the action plan relating to the Office of the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, an increase in the representation of women in mission leadership is specifically recommended.

11. A persistent area of weakness with regard to accountability is the slow development of a common tool for assessing progress and gaps. This makes it difficult to compare and evaluate progress throughout the system. Furthermore, although the Secretariat had instituted a criterion of "respect for diversity/gender" as part of the performance indicators for all staff, this was not applied systematically or consistently in all cases.

B. Gender balance

12. Concerned that a wide gap remains between policy and practice and convinced that gender balance is a key lever in the promotion of gender mainstreaming, the Council requested entities to ensure gender balance at headquarters and at the country level.

13. In order to promote gender balance, a new ILO action plan for gender equality 2008-2009 seeks to ensure greater parity between women and men in promotions to senior posts, in management and in leadership training programmes. It also seeks to strengthen and enforce provisions for a gender-sensitive and family-friendly workplace. The UNDP gender equality strategy 2008-2011 recommends special measures, including affirmative action, to attain and sustain the 50:50 parity goal. It further recommends more efficient inter-agency mobility, particularly for women in senior management positions, and emphasizes the need for more rigorous implementation of work/life policies and flexible working arrangements to create an enabling work environment and stronger accountability. The UNDP strategy reaffirms the Programme's commitment to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment as not only one of its operational principles for enhancing development effectiveness, but also a development goal to be pursued in its own right. The United Nations Volunteers has reached gender parity, including at the senior management level. Work/life balance policies and flexible working arrangements have been endorsed and promoted by management and are now widely accessible by staff.

14. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) gender action plan identifies a range of measures to achieve 50 per cent representation of women at senior management levels by 2015. The action plan

focuses on three areas — recruitment, training and mentoring, and work/life balance — with the objective of ensuring gender balance among those in senior management positions. UNHCR, through its Special Constraints Panel, is working to alleviate personal difficulties experienced by staff at the time of scheduled rotations. Appeals can be addressed to the Panel, which considers staff members' circumstances and provides recommendations that are submitted to the Director of Human Resources for endorsement.

15. A number of factors impede progress in attaining gender balance. Entities reported that among them were inadequate accountability, monitoring and enforcement mechanisms. The lack of gender balance entities weakens the ability of the United Nations to mainstream gender since there is little or no basis on which managers can work to change the status quo.

C. Financial and human resources

16. Economic and Social Council resolution 2008/34 requested the United Nations system to ensure that programmes, plans and budgets visibly mainstream gender perspectives and allocate adequate financial and human resources for gender mainstreaming commensurate with the organizational gender equality goals. However, most entities still do not have sufficient financial and human resources to meet those goals. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU), for example, is experiencing major budgetary constraints in its gender mainstreaming efforts, which have had negative effects on progress. The Department of Security and Safety needs additional resources to increase its ability to identify, appoint and retain female security officers. In addition, existing resources are not adequate to fully address the security and safety needs of female staff serving in the field.

17. Lack of funding has been a serious obstacle to the ability of the International Research and Training Institute (INSTRAW) to fulfil its mandate and collaborate with other entities of the United Nations system in gender mainstreaming and capacity-building. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) notes that although it has prioritized gender equality and allocated resources accordingly, the inadequacy of funding for gender equality work on a global and system-wide level affects the work of the Fund.

18. UNDP noted the critical importance of additional resources in support of regional and country-level work on gender equality. A contribution of $2.5 million to the gender thematic trust fund from the Government of Spain financed 23 country-level projects throughout 2007 and 2008. The fund focuses on delivery of gender-sensitive poverty reduction strategies, gender-sensitive indicators and statistics to track progress towards gender equality, legal and institutional capacity-building, and vulnerability and opportunity assessment as a tool to measure the feminization of poverty. It has catalysed an enormous amount of interest and demand among UNDP offices, United Nations entities and other stakeholders. As a result, recent demands for funds amounting to $26 million have greatly exceeded the contribution of the Government of Spain. WHO regional and country offices face human resources shortages, with country offices often experiencing high turnover rates of gender focal points. With overall institutional budget cuts, work on gender across the Organization is currently receiving less financing than in the 2006-2007 biennium

despite increased interest and support for collaborative activities across WHO and in countries.

19. It is evident that the effective integration of gender perspectives across all areas of the United Nations work as well as in its institutional culture must be supported by increased levels of human and financial resources.

D. Gender specialists and gender focal points

20. A corps of well-trained gender specialists and focal points has the potential to significantly strengthen the efforts of United Nations entities to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. While entities continue to rely on gender specialists and focal points to promote gender mainstreaming, few of them provide adequate training or resource materials to enhance the performance of focal points. However, a few entities have led the way in this area. In 2008, UNDP provided gender mainstreaming training at its Bratislava Regional Centre for gender focal points from the region. The training equipped the gender focal points and other UNDP project staff who were identified as potential gender change agents with the basic concepts, tools and skills necessary to design and facilitate gender mainstreaming at the country level. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations, in conjunction with the International Training Centre of ILO, organized a training-of-trainers programme for gender focal points with the aim of building capacity for gender mainstreaming training and ensuring sustainability at the country level. ILO has recently started to offer workshops on the "how to" of gender mainstreaming to staff at Headquarters and in the field. The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) is taking the first steps towards developing a gender mainstreaming training programme, beginning with training for gender focal points in the field.

21. Slow progress is being made with respect to promoting the collaboration and coordination of gender specialists and focal points in areas of peace and security, humanitarian affairs and economic and social development. Approximately 20 United Nations Volunteers gender specialists, out of a total of 47, are serving in peacebuilding/peacekeeping operations.

22. Despite this, the number of gender specialists and focal points at the headquarters, regional and country levels remains low. This means that the critical mass required to effect change in a catalytic manner has yet to be achieved.

E. Progress with data collection and their use in measuring results

23. Subparagraphs (i), (j) and (p) of paragraph 4 of Economic and Social Council resolution 2008/34 address the need to promote data collection, a common understanding of a results-based management framework, with benchmarks and indicators for measuring progress and the inclusion of gender equality results and gender-sensitive indicators in entities' strategic frameworks. Improving the ability of the United Nations system to measure progress in addressing gender mainstreaming is critical as it would also enhance accountability.

24. Most entities reported the use of results-based management frameworks to improve gender mainstreaming and narrow the gap between policy and practice.

Entities increasingly set concrete targets and indicators to be systematically monitored at the country level. In line with its results-based management system, UNDP has integrated gender equality in monitoring and evaluation tools and processes. In addition, the UNDP "balanced scorecard" will be enhanced by integrating the gender mainstreaming scorecard that was developed and tested in 2007-2008. The WHO programme budgets for 2008-2009 and 2010-2011 bienniums include relevant indicators on the incorporation of gender analysis in its normative work. Future progress will be measured against the indicators.

25. Using a results-based management framework, UNHCR is streamlining its standards and indicators to increase gender sensitivity and provide a better picture of the well-being of girls, boys, women and men in the context of its work. It is also establishing and promoting the systematic use of a set of agreed standards and indicators for planning and measuring the impact of its operations.

26. Several entities have developed means of impact assessment, including indicators to systematically monitor and evaluate training and the performance of trainers. Although the Department of Management has traditionally based evaluations only on data gathered from participants at the end of a programme or workshop, it plans to expand the data to include a follow-up questionnaire, surveys and focus groups, among others, for certain targeted programmes in 2009/10.

27. UNESCO encourages management and staff to integrate a gender perspective in the workplans they develop for each biennium. As a result, the organization has been able to monitor the impact and effectiveness of training as workplans are reviewed and new ones developed. In UNDP, targets and indicators on capacity-building for gender mainstreaming are part of the gender equality strategy. ILO also includes various indicators on training in its Action Plan.

28. UNHCR has developed indicators to assess the impact of gender training into its age, gender and diversity mainstreaming accountability framework. The main indicators seek to ensure, inter alia, that all staff in UNHCR country operations base their protection, programme planning, design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and follow-up actions on participatory assessment with women, men, girls and boys using a rights- and community-based approach.

29. At UNICEF, key results indicators in the organization's medium-term strategic plan have been revised and strengthened from a gender perspective, allowing for better tracking of progress in the promotion of gender equality. Sex-disaggregated data are required to be used for reporting on results in country programme documents.

30. As entities make progress in establishing indicators to monitor progress, many are also increasing their use of sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive indicators in materials disseminated to policymakers and the general public. In this regard, the collection of sex-disaggregated data is on the rise.

31. Various entities produce and analyse sex-disaggregated data, which support system efforts at gender mainstreaming. Within the Secretariat, the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has primary responsibility for data collection, and it continues to generate more sex-disaggregated data, especially to facilitate the measurement of progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs continues to provide analysis of sex-disaggregated

population data, which are widely used by the United Nations system, policymakers and the general public and have facilitated gender mainstreaming in the analytical work of United Nations entities. The official United Nations demographic estimates and projections prepared for all countries and areas of the world are sex-disaggregated, as are the data collection and analysis of international migrant stocks, rural and urban populations, marital status and mortality patterns of the population, including the demographic impact of AIDS. Other priority areas for analysis are fertility levels and trends and their determinants, including the use of contraceptives.

32. UNFPA plays a leading operational role in developing national capacities to collect, analyse, disseminate and utilize sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics at both the central and decentralized levels. It supports censuses and surveys, including the demographic and health surveys which focus on various priority gender issues. UNFPA also provides ongoing support for integrated management information systems to facilitate the storage, computation and presentation of data from various sources. UNICEF collects sex-disaggregated data in its multiple-indicator cluster survey and other data collection activities that it supports. INSTRAW prioritizes the collection and promotion of sex-disaggregated data to highlight the differences between status and roles of women and men, with a view to supporting the formulation of gender-sensitive public policy, programmes and projects. At the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), all fields and departments will be required to collect and code sex-disaggregated data in the next biennium (2010-2011), and all the indicators will be compared with an existing baseline of such data. This will give UNRWA a clearer idea of gender gaps in its service delivery so that it can take the necessary corrective measures.

33. With regard to monitoring gender mainstreaming in training and staff development, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) has developed templates to collect information from participants in training and recipients of fellowships. It also collects and analyses sex-disaggregated data on the selection of OIOS staff.

F. Unifying evaluation methodologies

34. In its resolution 2008/34, the Council highlighted the need to assess gaps in gender mainstreaming and to unify evaluation methodologies. Although individual entities are making progress in developing and implementing their evaluation strategies, limited progress has been made in reaching a unified methodology. However, several entities reported on their participation in working groups of the United Nations Evaluation Group, which is preparing an overview of institutional practices regarding management response to evaluation in order to identify lessons learned by organizations and to identify good practices. The main purpose of the overview is to standardize approaches towards the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in evaluations.

35. Many entities cited their participation in the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality and other inter-agency processes, as well as surveys and questionnaires, as useful opportunities to assess progress in gender mainstreaming. In order to strengthen the capacity of other entities, INSTRAW offers assessment,

monitoring and evaluation services through the review of annual and other reports, focus group discussions and personal interviews to obtain a broad picture of gender mainstreaming efforts and their strengths and weaknesses.

36. In order to enable staff to identify gaps in gender mainstreaming, ILO uses participatory gender audits for organizational learning at the institutional as well as individual levels. Its gender audit methodology is being used as an assessment tool for United Nations country teams. In contrast to the ILO work unit approach, the Economic Commission for Europe bases its assessments on the work of the gender focal point, who is in regular contact with substantive divisions.

37. Using the results of gender capacity assessments at the global and country levels, UNFPA will establish indicators for evaluating and monitoring progress in gender mainstreaming. Those assessments will help to enhance programme effectiveness and resource allocation for gender equality and women's empowerment. In 2008, a pilot global needs assessment was undertaken by UNHCR using a rigorous methodology drawn from its Strengthening Protection Capacity Project, which seeks to facilitate national responses to protection problems through a process of assessment, dialogue and joint planning in States hosting refugees. The assessment showed that 30 per cent of the needs of UNHCR refugees were unmet. The results were made available to interested United Nations entities and can serve to develop joint actions. The global needs assessment is being rolled out worldwide in 2010-2011.

38. The efforts of individual entities suggest a wide variety of approaches, without an emerging unified approach to the development of methodologies. This is a constraint to the ability of the United Nations system to make measurable progress in closing the gaps in gender mainstreaming.

G. Dissemination of good practices, tools and methodologies

39. United Nations entities continue to use varied approaches, including electronic and print media, to disseminate best practices on gender mainstreaming. Most entities reported the value of regular meetings on gender mainstreaming, in particular through the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality and its task forces, for that purpose. Some entities share good practices, tools and methodologies with United Nations country teams through gender audits (the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)), or through programme evaluations (the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)).

40. A number of entities provide such information on their websites. UNESCO videotapes and documents, the good practices, standards and methods of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), and the INSTRAW gender mainstreaming resource guide are all available on their websites. INSTRAW seeks to turn its resource guide into an interactive community of practice on gender mainstreaming in order to bring together gender mainstreaming practitioners for knowledge-sharing. The United Nations Volunteers participates in the UNDP GenderNet and the knowledge platform for United Nations Volunteers Country Offices Team and headquarters staff.

41. Other electronic initiatives include those of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UNIFEM, all of which have worked collaboratively to develop an inter-agency

e-learning course on gender. The course is the first of its kind and is meant to serve all four agencies. The main objectives of the course are to build staff capacity on gender equality programming through an interactive, self-paced online course, create a common understanding of gender equality, women's rights and gender mainstreaming on both the conceptual and practical levels, stimulate knowledge-sharing and management on gender issues and synthesize tools and knowledge on gender equality and capacity development.

42. ESCWA has also developed e-learning training modules, which are available to all staff on the Intranet. Other entities, such as the World Trade Organization, have not created their own electronic networks on gender mainstreaming, but are contributing to existing networks.

H. Collaboration at the country level

43. Several entities have established ways to strengthen collaboration with United Nations country teams and other national stakeholders in gender mainstreaming efforts. Collaboration within and among the country teams continues to be strengthened, including through joint action with national partners and increased joint programming, monitoring and evaluation and pooling of resources.

44. UNDP has gender focal points in most of its country offices. Gender focal teams are being introduced so that there is a gender focal point appointed across all programme areas. Gender thematic groups, which bring together gender focal points from all the United Nations entities, also provide an opportunity to address gender equality issues across entities.

45. In the context of the new regionalized structure of UNFPA, gender mainstreaming capacity development activities are promoted through a technical assistance delivery model that focuses on collaborating with regional institutions, including those with mandates to advance gender equality and promote women's empowerment. The Fund will promote and monitor capacity development in the field of gender mainstreaming more effectively through its newly established regional and subregional offices. In accordance with its age, gender and diversity mainstreaming strategy to protect and empower disenfranchised groups, UNHCR supports the meaningful participation of women, girls, boys and men of all ages and backgrounds, using a rights- and community-based approach, in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of its policies, programmes, operations and activities.

46. As part of an inter-agency strategy, UNAIDS will help to develop regional capacities in support of national responses to HIV/AIDS. This will in the first instance be through direct financial support to selected institutions and knowledge hubs. Joint UNAIDS teams are responsible for the capacity enhancement of both civil society and Governments, as well as the United Nations system itself.

47. In order to promote democratic governance, UNDP has placed particular emphasis on working with partners to support women's political participation, including with political parties, to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. United Nations Volunteers gender specialists support national authorities in achieving women's empowerment goals. For example, the number of

Volunteers assigned as gender specialists in the context of peacebuilding and peacekeeping operations has steadily increased from 3 in 2004 to 20.

48. UNFPA has established partnerships with parliamentarians in many countries to provide political and legislative support for the empowerment of women. Along with other United Nations partners, it has supported the Regional Network of African Women Ministers and Parliamentarians to strengthen capacity development resource mobilization, advocacy and leadership skills.

49. INSTRAW has worked with a number of countries on the formulation of national action plans for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). The Institute supported the formulation of a national action plan for Liberia, which was launched in March 2009.

50. The Gender, Women and Health Network of WHO supports gender mainstreaming activities in countries on the basis of country demand, ranging from requests for capacity-building, such as in Tajikistan, to policy revision and assessment, such as in Yemen, to health sector reviews, such as in Kenya.

51. Several entities report that collaboration with external partners, including donors and civil society, is undertaken mainly at the country level in the process of technical assistance project design and implementation. FAO, for example, collaborates with external partners in order to strengthen the impact of its work and reports that collaboration takes the form of policy support/advice, technical assistance/support/advice and capacity development to integrate gender concerns in development strategies.

52. Limited resources and prevailing conditions continue to constrain gender mainstreaming efforts at the country level. UNRWA is facing a growing number of refugees and shortage of funds for its core programmes. Gender-specific initiatives compete with the need to provide basic health care and education for Palestinian refugees. ESCWA also reported that conflict and war make the implementation of activities difficult or, in some cases, impossible.

53. UNICEF and UNIFEM are working towards more coherent and holistic action by United Nations country teams to mainstream gender and to promote gender equality at the national level. The initiative is being piloted in Albania, Morocco and Nepal over a two-year period. The country teams will work to identify lessons learned from this experience.

I. Inter-agency collaboration

54. The United Nations system continued to strengthen inter-agency collaboration, including through the work of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, which reports to the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and its high-level committees for programme and management. The Network provides a forum for the exchange of information and collaboration on gender mainstreaming, capacity-building and the development of methodologies and tools. The Network's task forces seek to advance gender mainstreaming in a number of areas and play a catalytic role in drawing attention to gender perspectives in intergovernmental processes. The biennial workshops, organized by the Network in collaboration with the Development Assistance Committee on Gender Equality Network of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, continue

to provide opportunities for examining emerging issues and sharpening the approach to gender mainstreaming.

55. The campaign to end violence against women and girls, which was launched by the Secretary-General, has provided further opportunities for inter-agency collaboration. UNIFEM, in collaboration with the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues, organized a consultation with civil society organizations to discuss how to enhance partnerships to promote the goals of the campaign. The campaign and its framework provide an opportunity for all parts of the United Nations system to review their work with a view to identifying opportunities to incorporate activities and strategies for addressing violence against women and girls.

III. Update on actions taken to implement paragraph 4 of Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/36

56. Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/36 recognized the importance of training as critical for increasing the awareness, knowledge, commitment and capacity of staff in respect of mainstreaming a gender perspective into United Nations policies and programmes. In the resolution, the Council made various recommendations for enhancing capacity, especially through training. Progress in those areas has been reviewed in previous reports from the Secretary-General to the Council.

57. While entities continue their efforts to enhance capacity-building within the United Nations system, a key conclusion reached by the Secretary-General, which was included in his report to the Council on gender mainstreaming at its substantive session of 2008 (see E/2008/53), still remains, namely, that while promising initiatives continue to be undertaken by entities within the United Nations system, progress remains uneven. A systematic, effective capacity development programme on gender equality has yet to be established. However, note has been taken of the efforts that are under way, through the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, to achieve that end.

58. The commitment to gender mainstreaming training has clearly evolved, including the development or revision of specific strategies or action plans and the integration of gender mainstreaming training in core competence development programmes. For example, while gender mainstreaming has already been incorporated into the UNICEF core programme process training, additional training activities will take place at the regional and global levels in 2009 as part of a one-year action plan to follow up on an evaluation that was undertaken in 2007. The one-year plan will be followed by a multi-year plan, which will include a capacity-building component. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) plans to develop a comprehensive training policy which will require that a gender perspective be integrated into all staff and management training programmes by the end of 2009. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) executive leadership programme and management courses now include a gender perspective. The UNDP gender equality strategy 2008-2011 includes the development of a high-level learning programme that seeks to enhance internal capacities and ensure that UNDP delivers on commitments to gender equality. Monitoring and evaluation of the gender equality strategy within the UNDP system will be undertaken in 2010 in

collaboration with the Evaluation Office, which is an independent unit reporting to the Executive Board through the Administrator.

59. Progress is being made towards making gender mainstreaming training mandatory for all staff and towards developing specific training for different categories and levels of staff. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations has reported that there has been extensive integration of gender perspectives into capacity-building activities. Its Department-wide action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) sets out activities to ensure that a gender dimension is reflected in the work of each office. Implementation of the action plan is monitored by a gender task force, which comprises representatives from all offices in the Department. In addition, a full-time gender mainstreaming trainer works with the Department's Integrated Training Service to ensure that a gender perspective is incorporated into all training materials. All new staff, both at Headquarters and in the field, receive induction training from the Department, which includes a session on gender issues that are relevant to peacekeeping. At WFP, a new policy makes gender mainstreaming mandatory in all operations, and training will also be mandatory for all staff. Recognizing the importance of gender mainstreaming training for its almost 8,000 Volunteers, the United Nations Volunteers has included gender mainstreaming sessions in the induction training for its Programme Officers at its headquarters, which is in addition to any gender mainstreaming training which the Volunteers might receive in their hosting United Nations agency.

60. Gender mainstreaming training for managers to build up their capacity to lead work related to gender equality work is crucial. While a few entities reported that they had no specific training for managers, others reported that they are making progress in that area. Some are ensuring that managers participate in training that is offered to all staff; others have created specific training for managers. The UNESCO capacity development and training programme for gender mainstreaming is mandatory for all staff from the P-1 to D-2 levels. Following the launch of its gender equality strategy in 2008, UNDP reports that training for resident coordinators, resident representatives, deputy resident representatives and other managers has been implemented. Furthermore, its capacity development plan will include the revision of the resident representative/resident coordinator induction course and the development of specialized training/orientation on management for gender equality for middle and senior management.

61. WHO has been progressively developing and rolling out a capacity-building strategy for its staff and country partners on gender mainstreaming in health planning and programming. It has been building local, sustainable capacity through training-of-trainer activities in which local participants are coached by gender and health specialists on the implementation of the gender mainstreaming tools of WHO.

62. The Learning and Training Services of the United Nations System Staff College is developing a system-wide capacity development programme on gender issues. Significant investments have been made in the development of training materials, and the importance of learning from the experiences of specific entities has been noted.

63. Electronic knowledge networks are an essential part of capacity-building for gender mainstreaming and its follow-up. Mindful of the significant level of resources required for the development and maintenance of electronic knowledge

networks, the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality has in recent years focused on linking and expanding the existing networks and databases. Some entities report progress in the creation of new or expansion of existing electronic knowledge networks. The inter-agency website WomenWatch is launching a new "really simple syndication" gender equality newsfeed, which will collate and report news on gender issues across all entities. UNESCO shares its seminars, organized in the framework of the UNESCO Forum on Gender Equality, through the videotapes and documents available on its website. ESCAP reports that its Community of Practice on social inclusion, gender equality and health, initiated under the development account project, serves as a forum for regional and interregional dialogue on good practices with regard to mainstreaming gender into policies in the context of the Millennium Development Goals. UNHCR has designed a multimedia blog to explore values and policies related to age, gender and diversity mainstreaming.

64. One of the areas in which action is required to enhance gender mainstreaming is the clear identification of whom, and which office, should assume primary responsibility for gender mainstreaming training. Human resources offices are well placed to influence the inclusion of gender mainstreaming training as a core aspect of staff development. However, they often play only a supporting role, or no role at all. Examples of good practices, however, include WFP, where the gender unit previously had the primary responsibility for capacity development for gender mainstreaming. However, this responsibility will now shift to human resources, as development capacity in gender mainstreaming is now seen as a corporate priority. The gender unit will maintain a secondary role. At ILO, the Human Resources Development Department has primary responsibility for enabling institutional mechanisms for gender equality in the organization, including for staffing and training in gender mainstreaming. At UNHCR, the Staff Development Section in the Division of Human Resources Management is responsible for the mainstreaming of gender issues into management and leadership programmes and for ensuring that gender issues are part of training programmes. Gender issues have been mainstreamed into the UNHCR Management Learning Programme. The Office of Human Resources Management, via its Learning, Development and Human Resources Services Division, provides training to all Departments and offices away from Headquarters.

IV. Implementation of Economic and Social Council resolution 2006/9

65. In paragraph 19 of its resolution 2006/9, the Council requested the Secretary-General to report on the impact of the inputs of the Commission on the Status of Women on discussions within the United Nations system. The primary avenues through which the Commission's work influences discussion within the United Nations system are the agreed conclusions on the priority theme of the session.

66. The priority theme entitled "Financing for gender equality and empowerment of women" and the review theme, entitled "Women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution in post-conflict peacebuilding", for

the fifty-second session of the Commission (2008) continue to remain relevant and to shape discussion and action within the United Nations.

67. The Commission's themes stimulated much discussion across entities. ILO held an International Women's Day panel at headquarters in March 2008 on the theme "Investing in decent work for women: not just right, but smart" and published an information brief entitled "Small change, big changes: women and microfinance".

68. Various reports are also focusing on the priority theme of the Commission on the Status of Women. The fourth session of the ESCWA Committee on Women will focus on the theme "Economic participation of women".

69. UNDP, in collaboration with the American University and KwaZulu Natal University, the International Development Research Centre and the Ford Foundation, carried out a research project in eight countries (Argentina, Ghana, India, Mexico, Morocco, South Africa, Uganda and the United Kingdom) on globalization, gender and taxation: improving revenue generation and social protection in developing countries. The project aimed to advance the understanding of the impact of tax policies and tax reforms on gender equality in countries at various levels of development. The United Nations Volunteers, in coordination with several other United Nations entities and through extensive consultations, has initiated research on gender and volunteerism as an initial step to develop a prescriptive content on gender and volunteerism.

70. There has also been impact on the discussions between the United Nations and civil society. UNIFEM worked throughout 2008 to provide access to information and support to gender equality advocates in the area of financing for development. Working closely with a coalition of women's groups, UNIFEM participated in civil society hearings, side events and General Assembly discussions of each of the chapters in the Monterrey Consensus. The Fund organized joint side events with UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA at the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development to review the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, held in Doha from 29 November to 2 December 2008, and contributed to the inclusion of detailed references to gender equality and macroeconomic policy in the Doha Declaration on Financing for Development.

71. UNFPA strengthened its partnerships with organizations specializing in the area of microfinance. As a result of the partnership between UNFPA and the Microcredit Summit Campaign, a network was established to connect and support microcredit practitioners, advocates, educational institutions, donor agencies, international financial institutions, non-governmental organizations, and others involved with microcredit to promote good practices in the field.

72. The Women Leading for Livelihoods initiative of UNHCR, which aims at promoting the economic independence and empowerment of refugee and displaced women and girls around the world, expanded its support to projects in Brazil, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Georgia, Kenya, Morocco and Serbia in 2008.

73. Those enduring impacts are the result of extensive preparations leading into the fifty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women and a concerted effort by the Division for the Advancement of Women to disseminate information related to the themes. For example, several conferences, workshops and media outreach events took place in 2008. The Division for the Advancement of Women

prepared a brochure containing the 2008 agreed conclusions of "Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women" in order to bring attention to gender perspectives in preparation for the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development. The Division for the Advancement of Women and the Financing for Development Office of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs hosted a workshop on Inequality, Development and Growth, co-organized with the International Association for Feminist Economics, in May 2008 at Headquarters in New York. The Department of Public Information produced a media advisory and two backgrounders, one on "Investing in women and girls" and the other on "Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women".

74. Discussions on the 2008 review theme "Women's equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peacebuilding" also spurred or strengthened a number of activities in entities, especially through reinforcement of work related to the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

75. In 2008, the Department of Political Affairs included gender mainstreaming as a cross-cutting issue in discussions with the African Union Commission on conflict prevention, mediation and electoral processes. Within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, gender units in peacekeeping missions have been advocating for women's participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peacebuilding in line with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). Despite those efforts, more needs to be done by other entities to enhance the role of women in those areas.

76. ILO has drafted guidelines on the socio-economic reintegration of ex-combatants (with chapters on women and girls as well as on young men) and developed a joint ILO/UNHCR technical cooperation partnership in Liberia on a job opportunities survey and capacity-building of the local cooperative development authority and the Liberia Opportunities Industrialization Centres (with a component on women).

77. ESCAP is planning to give attention to Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and some of the recent review themes of the Commission on the Status of Women in its high-level intergovernmental meeting to review implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action, scheduled for October 2009. ESCWA is preparing a flagship publication on the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) in the ESCWA region and the participation of women in conflict resolution and peacebuilding. The study will include case studies from conflict-stricken areas such as Lebanon, Iraq and Palestine, and another study will analyse the conditions that promote or delay the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) in the regions covered by ESCWA.

78. UNIFEM facilitated the involvement of women's groups to develop common agendas to influence peace processes in Burundi, the Darfur region, Guatemala, Rwanda, the Sudan and Uganda and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. UNIFEM has also supported gender responsive peace processes in Burundi, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guatemala, Somalia, the Sudan and Uganda. In 2009, UNFPA will continue to provide guidance, technical assistance and coordination support at the country level with regard to resolution 1325 (2000), including by undertaking a needs assessment exercise in select UNFPA country offices to ascertain current work undertaken, which will also guide future programming; develop indicators to measure work and impact on this issue; and

participate in meetings of the Inter-agency Task Force on Women, Peace and Security, while undertaking activities as delineated by the Task Force.

79. In 2008, INSTRAW launched the gender and security sector reform toolkit, which is an initial response to the need for more information and advice on the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of security sector reform processes from a gender perspective. The toolkit is designed to provide policymakers and practitioners with a general introduction to why gender issues are important in security sector reform, as well as practical tips on how to incorporate gender issues in security sector reform policies and processes and increase women's participation as key actors in the security sector.

80. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs actively promoted the participation of women's organizations (around 300 non-governmental organizations and other civil society organizations) in the peacebuilding portal (www.peacebuildingportal.org), an interactive online database for organizations working in conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

81. While it is too early to evaluate the impact of the priority theme of the fifty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women, "Equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS", advocacy to ensure the equal sharing of responsibilities, including in the context of the current financial crisis, has been strengthened. Thus, ILO warns that the current global financial crisis could exacerbate the double burden of women holding jobs in the labour market while taking care of chores and relatives at home. Helping women to achieve a better balance between work and family life must be part of national policies to achieve decent and productive work for both sexes.

V. Conclusions and recommendations

82. United Nations entities continue to make progress towards gender mainstreaming. A gender scorecard is being developed through extensive consultation between the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the Department of Management and the Office of Human Resources Management. The scorecard will include information on the use of flexible working arrangements, functioning of the gender focal point system, use of the roster in staff selection and other measures, and will be part of twice yearly reporting to the management committee. In addition, the Office of Human Resources Management is working with the Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women to develop revised gender balance targets for the 2009-2010 human resources action plans. Implementation is monitored through these human resources action plans as well as the Secretary-General's compacts with heads of departments and offices. Many entities have included accountability for gender mainstreaming in overall institutional accountability frameworks, monitoring, evaluation and oversight mechanisms, and staff performance appraisals. Progress has been made to enhance the capacities and resources of gender specialists at both the headquarters and country levels.

83. An increasing number of entities have made specific commitments to gender mainstreaming training, including in core competence development to ensure that all gender equality policies, strategies and action plans include such commitments.

Mandatory training has been introduced in some entities, and training for different categories of staff, including management levels, has also been established.

84. Entities have continued to use results-based management frameworks with targets and indicators as a means to improve implementation and monitoring of progress in gender mainstreaming. The use of sex-disaggregated data continues to increase.

85. Some progress is being made with regard to assessing gaps in gender mainstreaming and unifying evaluation methodologies. For example, the United Nations Evaluation Group is conducting a study to prepare an overview of institutional practices regarding management response to evaluation and to identify lessons drawn by organizations from their experiences. The main purpose is to standardize approaches on gender mainstreaming in evaluations. Yet progress towards harmonizing approaches to gender mainstreaming and evaluation of progress has been slow. Most entities continue to use entity-specific tools to assess progress and gaps.

86. Inter-agency collaboration has increased and strengthened, especially through the work of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality, which provides a forum for the exchange of information on gender mainstreaming, collaboration on capacity-building and the development of methodologies and tools and the United Nations Development Group.

87. The priority themes of the Commission on the Status of Women continue to influence discussion and action within and across entities.

88. The number of, and training and capacity-building for, gender specialists and gender focal points remains inadequate. Thus, the primary catalysts for the promotion of gender equality and gender mainstreaming may not be adequately equipped for the tasks.

89. In general, there is a clear need to harmonize approaches to gender mainstreaming, including approaches to training, monitoring, and measurement and evaluation of progress. Harmonization holds the key to ensuring accountability within and across entities and is fundamental for system-wide coherence and a One United Nations approach.

90. Overall progress on gender mainstreaming has been uneven, however, and gaps and challenges remain. The underresourcing of gender equality activities remains a significant challenge. In most entities, gender mainstreaming has not been matched by sustained and predictable human and financial resources, which results in limitations in the delivery of systematic support for gender equality at the country level.

91. **To ensure that United Nations entities strive to enhance progress in gender mainstreaming to close the gap between policy and practice, and that they do so with unified tools and approaches, the Council may wish to recommend that entities take the following actions:**

(a) **Collaborate to establish specific accountability guidelines, tools and mechanisms for gender mainstreaming at the Headquarters, regional and country levels;**

(b) **Further strengthen monitoring, reporting and evaluation of progress and identification of gaps, using common methods and indicators developed collaboratively, to allow assessment of progress across the system;**

(c) **Substantially increase the use of electronic means to provide capacity development for managers and staff, including mandatory staff training in all entities;**

(d) **Ensure that the provision of gender mainstreaming training is tailored to the needs of specific sectors and different categories of staff;**

(e) **Further strengthen the role of gender specialists and focal points by ensuring that all field offices and Headquarters have gender focal points and specialists and by creating enabling environments that provide clear mandates, increased capacity development and resources to support them;**

(f) **Ensure operationalization of the system-wide policy and strategy on gender mainstreaming and strengthening knowledge management and exchange, including through the use of electronic networks and databases, as applicable;**

(g) **Use existing training institutions, especially the United Nations System Staff College, to assist entities in developing and applying unified training modules on gender mainstreaming;**

(h) **Continue to use all avenues, including the Secretary-General's campaign to end violence against women, to strengthen inter-agency collaboration for gender mainstreaming and for developing a coherent and unified approach towards gender equality and women's empowerment;**

(i) **In the light of the continued relevance of the priority theme, "Financing for gender equality and empowerment of women", of the fifty-second session of the Commission on the Status of Women, and recognizing the gender dimensions of the current financial crisis, request entities to routinely address the impact of the crisis on gender equality and women's empowerment.**

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United Nations Public-Private Alliance for Rural Development

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The Economic and Social Council, in its 2003 ministerial declaration, highlighted the importance of promoting partnerships among stakeholders in support of the aims of rural development. In response, and in pursuance of Council resolutions 2004/49 and 2005/42, the United Nations Public-Private Alliance for Rural Development was launched as an ad hoc initiative of the Council to help further these aims, with Madagascar and the Dominican Republic serving as the first two pilot countries for the Alliance. The first report of the Alliance (E/2007/61) was considered by the Council at its substantive session of 2007.

The present report has been prepared in response to Council resolution 2007/36, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its substantive session of 2009. By the same resolution, the Council welcomed Angola and Ethiopia as the third and fourth pilot countries in the Alliance. The present report provides updated information on the activities undertaken in the first two pilot countries since the previous report and provides examples of activities carried out by stakeholders in support of rural development in the two new pilot countries.

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I. Introduction

A. Background

1. The present report has been prepared in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 2007/36, on the United Nations Public-Private Alliance for Rural Development, in which the Council requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its substantive session of 2009 on the implementation of the work of the Alliance.

2. The United Nations Public-Private Alliance for Rural Development was launched following the outcome of the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2003 of the Council, which considered the theme "Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development". In the ministerial declaration[1] adopted at that session, the Council underlined the importance of alliances among all stakeholders for the promotion of rural development and realization of its aims, which it considered essential to reducing poverty and achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

3. The key aims of the Alliance are threefold: (a) to work as a catalyst and facilitator in the promotion of partnerships among all stakeholders in support of rural development; (b) to provide a platform for collaboration; and (c) to highlight the results of the efforts of stakeholders by bringing them to the attention of the international community, through the Economic and Social Council.

4. By its resolutions 2004/49 and 2005/42, the Council welcomed the initiatives of the Governments of Madagascar and the Dominican Republic to serve as the first and second pilot countries of the Alliance. By the same resolutions, the Council invited all Member States, the funds, programmes and agencies of the United Nations system, the Bretton Woods institutions, civil society, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders to support the programmes and activities of the Alliance in its goal of promoting sustainable rural development. By its resolution 2007/36, the Council welcomed the interest expressed and the initiative of the Governments of Angola and Ethiopia to serve as the third and fourth pilot countries for the Alliance.

5. The present report provides updated information on activities carried out in support of strengthening public-private partnerships in the first two pilot countries, outlined in the previous report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Public-Private Alliance for Rural Development (E/2007/61). It also provides examples of stakeholder initiatives in the two more recent pilot countries, Angola and Ethiopia.[2] Also included is a section on activities undertaken at United Nations Headquarters in support of the four pilot countries. In addition, the report examines the impact of the current financial and economic crisis on efforts to achieve rural development in those countries. Section III of the report puts forward recommendations for strengthening the activities of the Alliance.

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[1] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/58/3/Rev.1), chap. III, para. 35.

[2] Organizations which provided inputs to the present report are listed in the annex.

B. Importance of rural development

6. One of the Millennium Development Goals, which represent a global strategic partnership formulated to respond to the world's main development challenges, is to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger. As three of every four poor people in developing countries — over one billion of them — live in rural areas, the promotion of rural development is essential to reducing poverty and promoting better standards of living for much of the world's population. This requires broad-based investment in rural areas that benefits entire communities, not only those engaged in agricultural activities.

7. Agricultural development alone is not enough to drastically reduce poverty but has proven to be uniquely powerful in helping to achieve that goal. Historically, improvements to this vital sector have been the foundation for overall economic development and poverty reduction. In most developing countries, agriculture is the largest employer, job creator and export earner. An increase in agricultural productivity contributes significantly to poverty reduction, especially in rural areas. A study of 58 developing countries found that a 10 per cent increase in agricultural productivity was associated with as much as a 6 per cent reduction in the proportion of people living on $1 a day.[3]

8. Rural infrastructure and support services play a key role in promoting rural development, specifically in the enhancement of agricultural production. They affect the quality, quantity, diversity, affordability, distribution and stability of the food supply from rural areas. Roads, transport, water and irrigation, power and telecommunications are important elements of rural infrastructure, and essential for rural transformation.

9. The improvement of access to water resources and improved sanitation are important both for the healthy livelihoods of rural populations and for agricultural production. Restricted access to safe drinking water and inadequate sanitation are root causes of many diseases that affect rural people in developing countries, reducing their capacity for productive work and thus diminishing their chances of escaping from poverty. In addition, in the past decade, there have been growing disparities in access to health care, with the majority of the poor, especially in rural areas, particularly disadvantaged in that regard. Furthermore, unanticipated medical expenditure is the second highest cause of rural indebtedness.

10. For rural development policies and programmes to succeed, it is crucial that they ensure that the most vulnerable people are protected. Achieving gender equality is essential for accelerating sustainable rural development, especially since women represent a considerable majority of the agricultural workforce. It has been estimated that rural women produce more than one half of the food grown in the world, provide up to 90 per cent of the labour in rice cultivation and play a key role in non-farm ancillary services, such as the sale of produce. Providing safety nets for them is vital to maintain both agricultural production systems and the rural family structure.

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[3] Lin Lin and others, "Agricultural productivity and poverty in developing countries", extension to DFID Report, No. 7946 (London, United Kingdom Department for International Development, 2001).

11. Rural development should be mainstreamed in national development frameworks and poverty reduction strategies. Policy decisions to advance rural development must be participatory and their implementation should involve all stakeholders. Ensuring that the views of minorities are taken into account and that the voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard may significantly assist in the successful implementation of such policies.

12. Commitment to investment in agricultural and productivity improvement should be maintained to hasten the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. Evidence shows that agricultural growth promotes rural and non-farm employment and has a considerable poverty-reducing effect.

C. Promotion of partnerships for rural development and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals

13. As stressed above, poverty and hunger reduction targets will not be met unless the level of poverty in rural areas is reduced. No agency or organization can single-handedly successfully tackle all of the challenges associated with rural development, or act alone as the advocate for its advancement. Consequently, partnerships are vital in tackling rural development and ultimately achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

14. This was emphasized by the Economic and Social Council in its 2003 ministerial declaration, in which it outlined the essential requirements to be met in pursuing these aims in developing countries. Considered crucial in the promotion of an integrated approach to rural development was the critical role played by partnerships at the national and international levels in fostering collaboration among the actors in various sectors.

15. The ministerial declaration of the Council has contributed to raising awareness regarding the importance of agricultural and rural development in furthering the development agenda, in particular with respect to combating the twin scourges of poverty and hunger. Various development partners have embarked on an initiative to bring together and improve the harmonization of their activities. Several examples of these partnership initiatives in the four pilot countries are provided in section II below.

16. Jointly preparing and implementing national rural strategies in recipient countries is an effective way of fostering both the mutual learning and information exchange required to ensure maximum development impact. Of crucial importance is the incorporation of the concerns of the rural poor in all facets of the strategic development framework.

17. The difficulty in tackling rural poverty reduction is greater today than in 2003. Old challenges persist, while new threats push the rural poor ever deeper into poverty. The increase in global food prices, which impacts directly on the poorest, especially the landless rural population, indicates an even more urgent need to improve conditions in agriculture and in rural areas. Simultaneously, the effects of climate change are undermining agricultural production, in particular in the more marginal areas where a large proportion of the rural poor live.

18. In order to increase the number of resources committed to rural development as well as to achieve development impact in rural areas, global partnerships need to share the lessons of experience, including best practices, build local capacity and enhance global advocacy for rural poverty reduction.

D. Impact and challenges of current crises on rural development

19. The scale and reach of the current financial crisis poses the threat of a rapidly deteriorating outlook for the world economy, which is expected to contract by about 2 per cent in 2009. Growth in emerging and developing countries is expected to slow from 6.25 per cent in 2008 to 3.25 per cent in 2009 owing to falling export demand and financing, lower commodity prices and much tighter external financing constraints.[4] The crisis has already seriously set back the development efforts of many poorer countries and increased the magnitude of the challenges faced.

20. Amid this grim prognosis, an overriding concern of the international community is the bleak situation now being faced with regard to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. The efforts of most developing countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals benefited from the improved economic growth and relatively low inflation that characterized the first years of the current millennium. However, with the downturn in the global economy, the gains achieved in the past decade are likely to dissipate and in some instances their reversal has already begun. New estimates by the World Bank suggest that 46 million more people will fall below the $1.25 a day poverty line and an extra 53 million people will be forced to live on less than $2 a day, compared to estimates made before the onset of the crisis.[5]

21. The global financial crisis comes on top of the food and energy crises in 2008, which had already pushed 130-155 million people into poverty between late 2005 and early 2008. Higher food prices added 115 million hungry people in 2007 and 2008, raising the total to close to 1 billion.[6] Rising food prices have also threatened the limited gains in alleviating child malnutrition. By 2006, the number of children in developing countries who were underweight exceeded 140 million, and it is now predicted that this global situation will be exacerbated by higher food prices. The Secretary-General's High-level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis has highlighted the need for increased investment in the agricultural sector to address some of the structural issues related to food security.

22. Climate change is an additional challenge as it modifies the physical and socio-economic conditions within which life occurs. Agricultural production is expected to fall in tropical and most temperate regions as a consequence of climate variability and the uncertain length of the growing season, decreased water availability, new patterns exhibited by pests and diseases and loss of biodiversity. It is the poorest and most vulnerable people in rural areas who are expected to be hit the hardest. Increases in temperature will reduce not only the yields of most crops

[4] International Monetary Fund, *World Economic Outlook Update*, 28 January 2009.

[5] World Bank, "Crisis hitting poor hard in developing world", press release No. 2009/220/EXC, 12 February 2009.

[6] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations estimates, 2008.

but the area of land available for crop growth. Furthermore, occurrences of drought and heavy flooding are likely to become more frequent and severe.

23. Given the limited institutional and financial capacities at the local level, the challenges posed by climate change will impact on poverty, hunger and the health conditions of rural communities. The living conditions of poor rural households and farmers who depend on natural resources and subsistence agriculture risk further deterioration.

II. Activities in support of rural development in the four pilot countries

A. Madagascar

1. Overview

24. With 80 per cent of the population of Madagascar living in rural areas and most living below the poverty line, its Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Fisheries in 2004 developed a five-year master plan for rural development which focused on sustained market-oriented business to develop the country's rural economy in an effort to significantly reduce rural poverty. Extensive services to strengthen agribusiness were introduced, including expanding market information systems, cooperative business formation, and creating rural child nutrition programmes.

25. The Government of Madagascar has integrated rural development and a green revolution as part of its Madagascar Action Plan, the second generation poverty reduction strategy for the period 2007-2012. Within this plan, the Government aims to secure land tenure, improve access to affordable rural financing, launch a sustainable green revolution, promote market-oriented activities, diversify rural activities, increase the agricultural value added and promote agribusiness. The Government has also been striving to establish an agribusiness centre in every region of the country to train and assist rural farmers and create better roads and communications to facilitate greater entrepreneurial and private sector involvement.

26. Globally, Madagascar is one of the richest nations in terms of biodiversity but it faces high levels of environmental stress caused by severe poverty among its people. A cycle of environmental degradation and poverty is created wherever agricultural needs lead to poor management of resources (i.e., forest loss, soil erosion, decreasing water availability), which in turn leads to increased poverty and a greater need for agricultural expansion. One of the key goals of the Madagascar Action Plan is to protect the environment by developing around it industry such as eco-tourism, promoting sustainable farming practices, and expanding the market for organic and natural products. The Government's commitment to advancing rural agriculture through these types of national programmes aims to lift the people of Madagascar out of poverty by 2015. However, the political crisis since January 2009 has had a negative impact on development efforts.

2. Activities of United Nations agencies and organizations

27. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) has in recent years placed greater emphasis on the importance of private sector development,

which provides most income-generating activities and job-creation opportunities and is increasingly the driving force for economic growth and poverty reduction. The Executive Board of IFAD has adopted a private sector development strategy which identifies the key elements of the institution's engagement with the private sector. Based on this strategy, IFAD supports local and private sector development through both policy dialogue and investment operations. It also enters into partnerships with the private sector in leveraging additional resource flows to rural areas.

28. The Fund supports the efforts of the Government of Madagascar to promote growth in the agricultural sector and the development of agro-based industry through four rural projects:

(a) The Rural Income Promotion Programme, which aims to increase the incomes and enhance the food security of the people living in one of the country's poorest provinces;

(b) The Upper Mandraré Basin Development Project — Phase II, which was completed in 2008 and was aimed at boosting food production in part of the dry region of the far south and helping to strengthen the food security of rural inhabitants and improve their living conditions;

(c) The Support Programme for the Rural Microenterprise Poles and Regional Economies, which was implemented in May 2008 and supports collaboration with the private sector through micro and small enterprises, value chains and professional organizations;

(d) The Support to Farmers' Professional Organizations and Agricultural Services Project, which was approved in 2008 and came into effect in January 2009. The overall objective of the project is to strengthen farmers' organizations in order to improve agricultural incomes and reduce the vulnerability of small producers (especially the poorest among them) by facilitating their access to a range of services and appropriate technology.

29. The implementation by the World Bank of its Agricultural Extension Programme Support Project in Madagascar has resulted in a partnership arrangement between the executing agency and other entities in the public sector, communes, non-governmental organizations and the private sector that have capacities for technology transfer and training. The Bank's Rural Development Support Project seeks to promote the identification of poverty-reducing, income-generating rural development programmes through greater participation by the private sector and non-governmental organizations. Various projects funded by the International Finance Corporation in the country also envisage greater scope for private sector involvement.

30. The International Labour Organization (ILO) has carried out a project financed by the Swedish International Development Agency, aimed at operationalizing pro-poor growth in two of the country's rural communities. Underprivileged families have been trained to identify potential economic opportunities in their communities and then work together with enterprises to develop local employment. Training methodologies employed by the International Labour Organization included training for rural economic empowerment and value chain analysis and upgrading. The latter enabled stakeholders from the local communities, the region and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry to examine another export-oriented

sector, embroidery, with a view to identifying ways in which to improve quality and stimulate employment.

31. Following the advocacy efforts of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Madagascar in New York and the United Nations Public-Private Alliance for Rural Development, the first millennium village was established in the rural commune of Sambaina, with funding from the Government of the Republic of Korea. The African millennium villages, promoted by the Millennium Project and the Earth Institute of Columbia University, offer a scalable model for fighting poverty at the village level and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The millennium village initiative works directly with the respective communities, non-governmental organizations and national governments to show how rural African communities can lift themselves out of poverty and achieve the Goals if they have access to proven and powerful technologies that can enhance their farm productivity, health, education and access to markets, while operating within the budget constraints established by international agreements for official development assistance.

32. The Sambaina Millennium Village project is currently implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) together with the Government of Madagascar. For the period 2008-2013, a host of partners from the public and private sectors are implementing the project, including the Ministry within the Presidency of the Republic in charge of Decentralization, the Government of Madagascar, United Nations agencies, local non-governmental organizations and local authorities. Through these partnerships and the expertise of all sectors, the project is geared towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

33. Within the framework of this initiative, a multitude of innovative projects are under way. For instance, in November 2008, an exchange of farmers between Sambaina and Antsirabe, a nearby village more advanced in rural development, took place with the goal of Sambaina villagers learning different agricultural techniques. In addition, an electrification project for the area of Ankadimanga was also initiated. Recent developments in the area, including a health centre and a primary and secondary school, had made Ankadimanga a hub for thousands of people and thus emphasized the need for electrification. This was made possible because of the positive partnership with the country's Rural Electrification Development Agency.

34. The Growing Sustainable Business initiative of UNDP works to build business-led solutions to poverty, by enabling the private sector, through building strategic partnerships between local stakeholders, to make a greater contribution to poverty reduction and sustainable development. Its initiative in Madagascar has actively facilitated innovative and pro-poor business ventures in a number of sectors. Activities undertaken include promoting eco-tourism, encouraging the use of solar power, strengthening small and medium-sized enterprises in the hydrocarbon sector, promoting energy diversification, and furthering the production of artemisinin-based remedies against malaria.

3. Activities of civil society organizations

35. The Public-Private Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to reducing poverty through a business approach to development. The Foundation brings together the corporate sector, government, civil society, academia and the United Nations to facilitate linkages, promote partnerships, encourage capacity-building and mobilize resources, commerce and investment in support of

development. Its aim is to forge productive linkages among organizations which are able to enhance pro-poor business at the national level, many of which have scant knowledge of the United Nations and the Millennium Development Goals.

36. The Permanent Mission of Madagascar in New York recently partnered with the Foundation, Maventy Health International and Project C.U.R.E. to make a permanent impact with the shipment to Madagascar of three 40-foot containers of medical equipment worth $1.2 million. The project aims to bring about sustainable infrastructure development in the health-care sector for the benefit of thousands of Malagasy people.

37. To meet the costs of the shipments of the medical equipment, the Permanent Mission of Madagascar, the Public-Private Foundation and Project C.U.R.E worked together once more to raise an additional US$ 100,000 from private donors. The first container was delivered in March 2009 and two additional containers are to be sent during the third quarter of 2009. Based on a needs assessment, the medical equipment will be delivered to the Befelatanana Hospital in Antananarivo, the Regional Hospital of Diego in Diego Suarez, and the Anivorano Nord Clinic.

38. The Osservatorio per la Communicazione Culturale e l'Audiovisivo nel Mediterraneo e nel Mondo (Observatory for Cultural and Audiovisual Communication) (OCCAM) was established in 1997 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, initially as a project based on the notion that communication is fundamental to social, economic and cultural development. The organization, which is now in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, focuses its work on the promotion of the crucial United Nations values of peace, tolerance and human rights through audiovisual means of communication: cinema, television and the Internet.

39. Over the past two years, OCCAM has increased its activities in support of the United Nations Public-Private Alliance for Rural Development by bringing the benefits of the digital revolution to disadvantaged communities in Madagascar and the Dominican Republic. In support of activities in the pilot countries, OCCAM widened its partnership with both public and private institutions to the Infopoverty Institute at the University of Oklahoma, the Politecnico di Milano, Skylogic, WINFOCUS and the Faculty of Agriculture of the University of Milan.

40. In September 2007, OCCAM undertook a mission to Madagascar, meeting with representatives of the ministries of health, education and foreign affairs, to discuss the delivery of e-health services to the country. In January 2008, in collaboration with WINFOCUS (an international non-profit scientific society which promotes the use of point-of-care ultrasound in clinical practice in order to improve primary, emergency and critical care in hospitals), it organized a two-day training course for 72 doctors and nurses on the use of ultrasound technology in emergency situations.

41. Since September 2008, a partnership between OCCAM and Skylogic enabled the first information and communications technology model village in Madagascar to have a free one-year Internet connectivity, thus boosting the use of the Internet and computers by local partners, ranging from farmers to teachers, at the new community resource centre. About 500 persons from Sambaina and the neighbouring district of Manjakandriana continue to use the local services on a

regular basis, while 600 students aged from 11 to 15 years receive regular training to accelerate the digital literacy of the rural village.

42. In 2007 and 2008, the Agricultural Cooperative Development International/ Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Association (ACDI/VOCA), with funding from the Millennium Challenge Corporation, provided consultancy services and assistance to Madagascar's Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries. In efforts to combat poverty and corruption, ACDI/VOCA conducted training to build the capacity of the Ministry and strengthen partnerships for rural development and agricultural marketing. In addition, it provided technical assistance in agribusiness to help the Ministry improve investment incentives in agriculture.

43. Maventy Health International works with the Ministry of Health in Madagascar, along with several other non-profit organizations, to promote the development of a sustainable health-care model in the Anivorano Nord region in the northern part of the country. The Organization has collaborated with Project C.U.R.E. in supporting the development of medical projects and, in September 2008, signed a memorandum of understanding with Sepsis Alliance to consider a collaborative approach in the fight against infectious diseases as they relate to sepsis. Its health-related work, including the facilitation and coordination of the international collaborative initiatives of organizations interested in improving health-care delivery in Madagascar, has contributed considerably to rural development efforts.

B. Dominican Republic

1. Overview

44. In the last two years, the Dominican Republic has grown an average of 7 per cent. Agriculture is still a major part of the economy of the Dominican Republic. Over 30 per cent of the land is suitable for cropping, 17 per cent of the workforce is engaged in this sector and, in 2006, agriculture made up 9.9 per cent of the annual gross domestic product. The agriculture sector is the biggest source of domestic consumption and the second largest export earner. After joining the Central America Free Trade Agreement (now known as DR-CAFTA) in 2007, agricultural export growth has accelerated, and after the provisional entry into force of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) between the CARICOM and the European Community, agricultural exports have grown at an annual rate of 50 per cent.

45. Nevertheless, serious challenges face the agricultural sector, most of which derive from the vulnerability of the country, including to frequent hurricanes, earthquakes and tropical storms. Tropical storms in September 2007, for instance, were responsible for a loss of $1.8 billion in revenues that year. In addition, low public investment, decreasing availability of credit, weak productive infrastructure and low levels of education in the workforce all impede the advancement of the agricultural sector. To tackle these challenges, the Presidential Commission on the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development was established in 2004. The Commission is charged with monitoring and evaluating the country's progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals; its participants include representatives of various sectors, such as government, private sector and civil society, and the United Nations (through the United Nations Public-Private Alliance for Rural Development). Its task force on hunger aims to strengthen these

partnerships in order to raise awareness of and increase the attention paid to the Millennium Development Goals in low-income areas.

46. Many public-private alliances have been developed during recent years. Examples are some which enable the leasing of machinery from the private sector through the Ministry of Agriculture, joint planning and rice-importing agreements, the financial support provided to small farmers and agro-industrial enterprises by government institutions, and the partnership of the FAO Special Programme for Food Security with the Ministry of Agriculture and non-governmental organizations. These developments work to counter the numerous challenges mentioned above and promote rural development as a whole.

2. Activities of United Nations agencies and organizations

47. The IFAD country programme for the Dominican Republic has two major strategic objectives: (a) social capital and community development; and (b) income generation. Regarding the latter, efforts are directed towards the identification of agricultural and non-agricultural income-generating activities and facilitating the participation of small producers in local, national and export markets.

48. In response to the request of the Government of the Dominican Republic and in alignment with the country's social and economic development policies, IFAD has recently finalized the design of a new project that aims to improve the competitiveness and linkages to markets of smallholder farmers and their economic organizations in the poorest areas of the country, specifically, the 11 western provinces on the border with Haiti. The project will focus on both staple food crops (e.g., rice, beans and bananas) for local, regional and national markets, and niche export commodities (e.g. quality coffee and organically grown bananas).

49. The project will actively promote alliances among key public or private players involved in the selected value chains. The objective of these alliances is to reinforce the relationship between smallholder producer organizations and the key private sector players in the value chain. These stronger relationships will improve the long-term position of producer organizations as suppliers in national and international markets. Other project components include strengthening smallholder farmers' organizations by building management and marketing capacities, and promoting technological innovation and diversification, as well as rural finance.

50. The World Food Programme aims to replicate a programme supported by Fundar, a Mexican foundation with experience in the rural sector, in the Dominican Republic, given that the Dominican Republic is also prone to natural disasters. The Mexican programme provided pre-harvest credit and insurance to cover the loan to farmers with surplus capacity, as a form of protection and for agricultural extension services.

51. An irrigated land and watershed management project, currently being funded by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development with the goal of increasing productivity in irrigated agriculture and promoting beneficiary participation through water user associations, is being implemented in various parts of the Dominican Republic. Consultancy services are required for the supervision of reconditioning, modernization and follow-up work on irrigation systems and watershed management.

3. Activities of civil society organizations

52. In late 2007, OCCAM signed an agreement with the municipality of Santo Domingo Norte for the creation of a new information and communications technologies village in the country. Such villages aim to strengthen e-learning, promote telemedicine in local health-care facilities, facilitate the use of the Internet, e-mail and word-processing in local government offices, and promote the use of Internet-based consulting for improving agricultural production. Following the signing of the agreement, 30 computers were procured by OCCAM and transported to the municipality to complete the first phase of the project. In March 2008, representatives of OCCAM met with the Vice-President of the Republic in connection with the launch of the Infopoverty Programme in that country and the establishment of the Infopoverty Institute of the Caribbean at the Catholic University in Santo Domingo.

53. The Instituto Dominicano de Desarrollo Integral, a non-profit organization dedicated to contributing to the integral development of the Dominican Republic, with special emphasis on its low-income population, is committed to working for the development of the country's rural areas. The organization has initiated programmes in the area of health, basic sanitation, education, infrastructure and the environment throughout the country. It promotes entrepreneurship and has helped to create successful and sustainable microbusinesses through the introduction of microcredit grants, combining funds from its own portfolio together with training programmes. Its strengths include community participation, sustainability, networking and public-private alliances.

54. In the area of agribusiness, the Public Private Alliance Foundation, together with New York representatives of the National Supermarkets Association, the distribution company Super Produce, and the Centre for Export and Investment of the Dominican Republic, collaborated through Glocal, a local growers' organization, to meet with growers, government officials and foreign aid agencies in the Dominican Republic. Initial purchases and shipments have been made, agreements have been reached with the Dominican Agribusiness Board and Glocal, and steps are being taken to source investment and project funding for capacity-building in relation to production and supply chain management. In the area of renewable energy, the Public Private Alliance Foundation and business collaborators have explored issues of sugar-based ethanol and related bioenergy with representatives of businesses and growers, United Nations staff, investors, government officials, non-governmental organizations and universities. This has led to a partnership with ResearchPAYS, Inc., a market research consulting firm for businesses, to develop further initiatives for stakeholder collaboration in this area.

55. The Public Private Alliance Foundation has also mobilized a grant from the Western Union Foundation for microfinance training and lending by the Dominican non-governmental organization, Esperanza Internacional, and has raised funds for community efforts to rebuild housing after tropical storms hit the Dominican Republic on several occasions during the period from 2007 to 2009.

C. Angola

1. Overview

56. The end of the armed conflict in Angola, which had raged for nearly three decades, has decisively contributed to a climate of social stability and economic growth. Peace has enabled the free movement of persons and a revival of economic activity throughout the country. As a result, Angolans are participating in activities that support the fight against hunger and poverty and contribute to the development of rural communities. Since 2002, the Government's investment in the agricultural sector has been progressively and effectively increasing. This reflects the strategic importance of agriculture for the sustainable development of the country, given the vast percentage of the population that depends on it for employment and subsistence.

57. In May 2007, the Rural Development Programme, coordinated by Angola's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, was implemented. The issue of rural development is at the core of the activities of the Ministry, in addition to other programmes such as the Rural Outreach and Development Programme, which aims to provide farmers with agricultural supplies, such as seeds, fertilizers and tools, as well as technical assistance services.

58. The prime objectives of the Rural Development Programme are to: contribute to the improvement of living conditions in rural areas in an effort to align them with those in the nation's main cities; harmoniously integrate the development of rural communities in national economic and social development programmes; install systems for water capturing, processing and distribution, as well as basic sanitation; organize rural trade, crafts and local production; and disseminate basic knowledge and simple techniques considered useful for agriculture, animal rearing and the processing and transformation of animal products.

59. Following legislative elections in September 2008, and under the new structure of government, the State Secretariat for Rural Development was created as an organ of the central administration of the State, responsible for defining, monitoring, coordinating, guiding and implementing national policies in support of rural development. The fundamental objective of the Angolan Government is to reduce the levels of absolute poverty, and to promote rapid, sustainable and comprehensive economic growth, as well as the reduction of regional disparities among its 19 provinces.

60. With the creation of the State Secretariat for Rural Development came the approval, in January 2009, of the Executive Programme which aims to promote integrated rural development projects, revitalize and diversify the rural economy, stimulate the creation of community organizations, promote rural finance and trade networks and promote public-private partnerships in order to improve the capacity for intervention in the sector.

2. Activities of United Nations agencies and organizations

61. Recent initiatives of IFAD included two projects, the Northern Region Food Crops Development Project and the Northern Fishing Communities Development Programme, both of which ended their activities in 2007, when a new rural development project was approved. In collaboration with the World Bank, and with a grant from the Policy and Human Resources Development Fund (Japan), the

Market-oriented Smallholder Agriculture Project is under way. The project is aimed at increasing the agricultural production of smallholders in three rural provinces, and, among other components, its focus is on strengthening capacities of the private sector and non-governmental agricultural service providers in the project area.

62. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is supporting national efforts aimed at strengthening the country's health sector, primarily in rural areas, through the funding of two projects aimed at increasing the availability of quality, integrated reproductive health services and of reproductive health information and services for adolescents and youth. In the area of gender, population and youth, it has funded capacity development workshops organized at the municipality level, with the goal of establishing linkages between increased sustainable development and women's empowerment and participation in decision-making, as well as increasing their access to reproductive health services.

3. Activities of civil society organizations

63. A three-way partnership between ACDI/VOCA, Cabinda Gulf Oil Company and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was established in December of 2003 as the Cabinda Agribusiness Development Alliance (CADA) with the objective of increasing household wealth for a large number of families in the Cabinda Province of Angola. One successful project was a programme, funded by the Cabinda Gulf Oil Company, to build the capacity of local farmers to supply fresh produce to workers at the oil export terminal, local restaurants, stores and hotels. The project resulted in the sale of fresher and less expensive produce than that traditionally imported from outside the province.

64. In addition, CADA empowered 6,226 beneficiaries, 30 per cent of whom were women, by helping them to develop profitable businesses and providing business and agricultural training to farmers. In April 2007, 30 smallholder CADA producers took part in a four-day regional agricultural fair held in Cabinda, which had over 3,000 attendees and 295 displays of different produce.

D. Ethiopia

1. Overview

65. Ethiopia has an agriculture-based economy, which employs over 85 per cent of its population. It is often severely hit by drought which occurs throughout the region. In addition, impediments such as poor management of land and resources, limited information, lack of appropriate technology, failure to integrate relevant policies, and lack of adequate implementation capacity, keep productivity levels low.

66. Long-term food insecurity has left much of the Ethiopian population dependent on food aid for survival. Agriculture is one of the country's most promising resources and the country has the potential to be self-sufficient in grains and for development of livestock exports. With this in mind, the Government adopted the agricultural development-led industrialization strategy in 2007, which aims to use agriculture as the base for the country's overall development. Its distinctive features include the commercialization of smallholder agriculture through diversification, a shift to high-value crops, the support and development of

large-scale commercial agriculture, effective integration of farmers in domestic and external markets, and tailoring interventions to address the specific needs of the country's varied agroecological zones. The Government's role in the strategy is to create policy measures that will promote these aims. Such measures include agricultural extension and research, design and operationalization of growth corridors, agricultural export promotion, and food security and safety-net programmes.

2. Activities of United Nations agencies and organizations

67. Over the past three decades, IFAD has supported 13 rural poverty reduction projects and programmes in Ethiopia, with an estimated overall cost of US$ 588 million. IFAD has also provided debt relief to Ethiopia, amounting to US$ 28 million, under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative.

68. In 2008, IFAD adopted its Country Strategic Opportunities Programme for the country, which is based on Ethiopia's second-generation poverty reduction strategy paper, and other relevant planning documents. The Programme focuses on three strategic objectives and is specifically aimed at enhancing access by rural poor people to natural resources (land and water), improved agricultural production technologies and support services, and financial services.

69. Ongoing IFAD operations in Ethiopia include the Agricultural Marketing Improvement Programme, which supports the Government's commitment to improve agricultural marketing. The aim is to stabilize domestic grain prices and encourage smallholder farmers to increase production and improve their incomes. Also under way is the Participatory Small-scale Irrigation Development Programme, which improves food security, family nutrition and incomes for poor rural households by developing irrigation schemes for small-scale farmers. The Pastoral Community Development Project has also been implemented to improve the prospects for sustainable livelihoods among herders living in arid and semi-arid lowlands. Finally, the Rural Financial Intermediation Programme has been put in place to help poor people who have no access to basic financial services.

70. The World Bank's Structural Adjustment Credit Project has provided an opportunity for the private sector to use foreign exchange by increasing its availability, and enhancing its role through price decontrol and reduced State ownership and operation of assets. In addition, its National Fertilizer Sector Project has been implemented with a view to creating an enabling environment for the growth of the fertilizer sector and fertilizer use in the country. The project has been co-funded by fertilizer importers and donors.

71. The UNDP Growing Sustainable Business initiative in Ethiopia is actively facilitating innovative and pro-poor business ventures through its Support and Facilitation for Private Sector Development Programme, which is executed by the Ministry of Trade and Industry. Activities undertaken include the Gaia project, involving the investment and promotion of the use of locally produced ethanol-fuelled cooking stoves, and the water project, a publicly backed commercial model for the provision of water delivery services to farmers at a commercial rate.

72. The United Nations Population Fund has supported the development of rural livelihoods in Ethiopia through its women's empowerment programme. In partnership with the United Nations Foundation and the Nike Foundation, UNFPA is

funding a three-year, US$ 1.5 million project in the area of women's empowerment. Within the framework of the Fund's mandate, such livelihood intervention programmes have an important role to play in promoting economic autonomy, particularly for women. From the perspective of UNFPA, the right combination of delivering sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS prevention skills and knowledge can help both women and young girls increase their self-autonomy and decision-making ability.

73. The Purchase for Progress initiative of the World Food Programme, which links small farmers to the Ethiopian Commodity Exchange, is being further expanded to involve private actors. The project is in the process of setting up a new marketplace serving farmers, processors, exporters and consumers, in which, for example, the support of local food processors in areas of high malnutrition and of life science companies able to improve the micronutrient content of products can make important contributions.

3. Activities of civil society organizations

74. The LWF-Ethiopia programme of the Lutheran World Federation has, over the past two years, focused its attention on implementing its integrated community development projects in all of its geographical intervention areas in Ethiopia. The main strategic objective of the projects is to shift major programmes from building irrigation, health and school structures to educating and empowering the rural community with knowledge and skills to successfully pursue individual and community needs.

75. Ethiopia has Africa's largest livestock population, which is largely concentrated in pastoralist areas of the country. ACDI/VOCA implements the USAID Pastoralist Livelihoods Initiative which aims to assist pastoralists create access to more profitable markets, as they have been traditionally concerned with minimizing risk due to droughts and economic hardship rather than maximizing profits. ACDI/VOCA has provided training workshops to develop the business skills of pastoralists and establish operationally sustainable market facilities that enable them to sell their livestock for fair prices. In addition, a pilot intervention undertaken to support drought-affected pastoralists provided emergency bank credit and the compilation and dissemination of market information to accelerate commercial start-up and increase coordination among non-governmental organizations.

E. Activities at United Nations Headquarters

76. In May 2007, the Public Private Alliance Foundation launched its first annual "Partners against Poverty" event, in which it sought to connect policymakers with local development initiatives in the Dominican Republic and Madagascar. At its second such event, held at United Nations Headquarters in July 2008, over 70 representatives from the private sector, government, civil society and United Nations agencies gathered to discuss, under the overall theme of "Awareness, agreement and action", possible ways to increase collaboration among relevant stakeholders to promote health, agribusiness, renewable energy, sustainable tourism, issues of concern to women, microfinance and entrepreneurship in Madagascar and the Dominican Republic.

77. Sulabh International is a pan-India social service organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, working in the field of environmental sanitation. It is actively involved in implementing improved sanitation facilities throughout India, and has developed an innovative, two-pit, pour-flush compost toilet for the safe disposal of human excreta that is both hygienic and affordable. In addition, the waste is treated through a technological process for use as a soil conditioner. The organization has also developed the technology of generating biogas from human waste from public toilets for use in cooking and on-site electricity generation.

78. In April 2008, within the framework of the United Nations Public-Private Alliance for Rural Development, the feasibility was discussed of sending a needs assessment mission to Madagascar to evaluate possible sites in the capital city of Antananarivo for the construction of public toilet complexes with biogas and effluent treatment plants for the on-site recycling of human waste. A mission was undertaken in August 2008, and an assessment was made for the construction of eco-friendly toilets in individual homes for an environment conducive to sustainable development of the area and improvement of the health and well-being of the people. Efforts are under way to find possible sources of funding for the successful implementation of the project.

79. In both 2008 and 2009, OCCAM invited high-level representatives of the four pilot countries to participate in the annual Infopoverty Conference held each March at United Nations Headquarters. In 2008, both the President of the Republic of Madagascar and the current Vice-President of the Dominican Republic participated in the event. One of the goals of the annual meeting is to give visibility to the results achieved through the use of new digital technologies for the advancement of rural development.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

80. **In order to strengthen public-private partnerships in support of rural development in the four pilot countries, there must be a major scaling up of engagement by organizations of the United Nations system with civil society and private sector partners in close collaboration with the Governments of the four countries. United Nations entities, which have outreach to the private sector, foundations and non-governmental organizations, could expand their efforts to foster partnerships that focus broadly on sharing and coordinating resources, knowledge and expertise for furthering the goal of rural development in these countries.**

81. The current economic and financial crisis is threatening not only to wipe out any recent gains made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, but also could prevent their targets from being achieved by 2015. **The international community must therefore pay special attention to the implications of the crisis for rural populations and implement specific measures to address them. Of critical importance is the need for sufficient additional resources to be targeted towards rural and agricultural development programmes and to address the challenge of food insecurity.**

82. The fact that women make up the substantial majority of the agricultural workforce in developing countries gives crucial importance to the role of women in accelerating sustainable rural development. **The integral role that rural women play should be highlighted during consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women of the priority theme of its fifty-fourth session in 2010, review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. Relevant policy recommendations could in turn serve as useful inputs to the annual ministerial review of the Economic and Social Council, which in 2010 will focus on the theme "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and the empowerment of women", the outcome of which could then feed into the session of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2012, when it considers the priority theme of the empowerment of rural women in relation to climate change and food security.**

83. As possible follow-up to the third implementation cycle of the Commission on Sustainable Development, which encompassed its sixteenth and seventeenth sessions and focused on rural development as one of the thematic areas, along with agriculture, land, drought, desertification and Africa, **the major groups of the Commission could be invited to pay increased attention to the promotion of rural development in each of the four pilot countries, and to report on their achievements during the overall appraisal by the Commission of the implementation of Agenda 21 during the 2016-2017 cycle. Possible inputs for the cycle could include new ideas and approaches for tackling rural development challenges in the four countries, as well as proposals and recommendations for consideration by the Commission.**

84. There is a need to replicate, adapt and scale up initiatives which have proven to be successful in the area of rural development. **To that end, efforts should be made by the United Nations system to further strengthen global advocacy, including through the sharing of information, and through discussion groups and online forums in which best practices and lessons learned could be highlighted.**

85. **In view of the voluntary nature of the Alliance, and the need to go beyond its advocacy role, consideration could be given to strengthening the support provided by the United Nations Secretariat in facilitating partnerships for rural development for the benefit of the pilot countries.**

Annex

Organizations which provided inputs to the report

Organizations of the United Nations system

World Bank

United Nations Fund for Population Activities

International Labour Organization

United Nations Office for Partnerships

United Nations Development Programme

World Food Programme

International Fund for Agricultural Development

Civil society organizations

Sulabh International

Public-Private Alliance Foundation

Lutheran World Federation

Instituto Dominicano de Desarrollo integral

Maventy Health International

Agricultural Cooperative Development International/Volunteers in Overseas Cooperative Assistance

Osservatorio per la Communicazione Culturale e l'Audiovisivo nel Mediterraneo e nel Mundo (Observatory for Cultural and Audiovisual Communication)